

PHOTON



**TOD BROWNING:**  
**A FILMOGRAPHY**

**THE MAKING OF FREAKS**  
**THE INVISIBLE MAN**





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**COVER/BACK COVER**- A mirror image of the immortal Lon Chaney in one of his most famous characterizations for Tod Browning's LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT. The artist: Bill Nelson.

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**IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD**- that the responsibility for the originality of all material sent to us is solely that of the contributor.

**STILL THIS ISSUE**- A behind-the-scenes publicity pose taken during the filming of FREAKS featuring director Browning with the stars of his film.

#### DEDICATION

This issue is respectfully dedicated to the man who has been responsible for so many of the most successful and enjoyable science fiction films ever made. The man who gave us THE TIME MACHINE, WAR OF THE WORLDS and WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE: George Pal. All of us are anxiously awaiting the new projects Mr. Pal has on the drawing board, including DOC SAVAGE and a sequel to WAR OF THE WORLDS.

George Pal & the Loeb See Monster from THE SKYNS  
FACED OF DR. LEO. [Photo by Tim Brehm]

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Bill Nelson: p. 3, 4, 25, 36, 44  
Richard Corben: p. 4, 46  
Steve Karchin: p. 10  
Dave Ludwig: p. 5



## FRANKLY SPEAKING...

With 1972 having passed so recently into a memory, I doubt that any of you would have been surprised if a large portion of this issue was devoted to critiquing the fantasy film fare of the last twelve months. What may be surprising, however, is the deliberate way we have avoided spending any appreciable time at all on the contemporary film scene.

The fact of the matter is, we were all considerably disappointed with the sort of product 1972 offered, and this is our way of conscientiously objecting. The various trends we predicted two issues ago materialized, and the unfortunate result is a slump in the production of quality fantasy films.

It's hard to be enthusiastic about the future of the genre when films such as *THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT*, *HARON BLOOD* and *THE CREEPING FLESH* continue to be released. Of course, it would be easier to ignore that sort of thing if other films--in many cases films we had been anxiously awaiting--didn't turn out to be such disappointments. Biggest let down of the year was probably *MACULA AD 1972*, which we did cover this issue. Other disappointments--which we didn't cover--were pictures like *AYISHI*, *DR. PHIBBS RISES AGAIN* and *SON OF BLOB*.

Even many of the films that were worthwhile must, in many cases, be considered mixed blessings receiving, as often as not, mixed reviews by fans. Here I'm referring to films like *THE OTHER*, *SILENT RUNNING*, *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* and *POOR FOLKS* on *VELVET*.

And so, as we move along into 1973, ever-hopeful for more quality motion pictures in the field of interest with which we are most involved, we offer you an issue of *PHOTON* largely geared to an examination of some important films and people from the history of the fantastic film. In realizing the elements that turned such films into classics, we are better able to accept or reject the sort of picture being made today.

Tod Browning features prominently in the pages that follow, despite the fact that he is not universally accepted as a director of "classic" horror films. There are fans who consider his work to be terribly dated and not at all resistant to the passage of time. Most of us, however, credit him with establishing a mood that has come to be as-

sociated with horror at its atmospheric best; a mood that many other directors have tried to capture, often unsuccessfully. Also included is a look at the most controversial of all of Browning's films: *FREAKS*. Eli Savada, who is currently preparing a book devoted to Browning, recounts the history of this most unusual horror story. Then Ron Borst takes a second look at the film that has become a cult-picture among the college crowd.

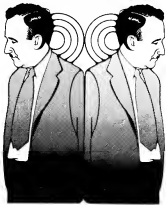
Paul Jensen, who chatted with Freddie Francis for our last issue, returns to examine *Wile's THE INVISIBLE MAN* to a degree not attempted before.

It seems hard to believe that it has been all of ten years since *PHOTON* #1 made an appearance back in 1963. Of course, the magazine has undergone so many changes since its early days that it bears little resemblance to its original self. Nonetheless, it has been ten years and, by way of celebrating our tenth anniversary, *PHOTON* #24 will be a special issue. In addition to presenting some new material, a large portion of #24 will contain articles and features from out-of-print issues. Although the final selections haven't been made, we intend to use only those articles that have received praise from the readers, using new stills and layouts to add to their appeal.

As always, we're vitally interested in what you have to say about the work we're doing. Your comments and criticism are important if we are going to continue to change and grow over the next ten years.

- Mark Frank -

# tod. browning





The front cover of PHOTON #22 is a masterpiece. Harold Shull cannot be overpraised for it. The two-tone effect is spellbinding. I liked the back cover and, while it was not as good as the front, it is leagues ahead of #21's back cover--that ridiculous spider! There is not a magazine in the world that has better photographs, both from a standpoint of choice of stills and reproduction quality. However, may I suggest that you try not to use as many publicity poses, as opposed to scenes. One of the most enchanting aspects of PHOTON is the use of candid & on-the-set photos. I was glad to see them liberally sprinkled through the magazine.

"Frankly Speaking" was a perfect kick-off to the issue--is there a subtle vein of cynicism running through your column, or is it me? In the first paragraph, you talk about how "fans have continued to broaden their horizons," and a few paragraphs later, you toss in "the film boasts of Peter Cushing in makeup as a rotting corpse." In any event, it was the best laugh in the magazine, if you exclude the Billen-Horst war.

There is such a thing as flogging a dead horse, and that, I think, is what Ron Horst does in his review of COUNT DRACULA. I appreciate, indeed I envy his thoroughness, but is it really an asset to the review? Please don't misunderstand--his account of the behind-the-scenes story is superb & important, and his analysis of the film as a whole--and its historical perspective--is incisive, but a scene by scene critique is a bit much. Larry Richardson gives a complete review of THE RETURN OF COUNT YORGA, and spares the reader the drudgery.

I thoroughly enjoyed Bob Sheridan's critique of INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. While at times his language becomes a bit lofty, I think he brings out some subtle points in the film, and his analysis of the transition of short story to book to film is brief, but good.

I found Jim Wnoroski's article on THE THING equally fascinating, especially his analysis of the symbolism & Freudian implications. One must be exceedingly careful when performing this sort of critique (as I know first-hand), for one can often find analogies & allegories where none exist. I think Jim keeps well within the bounds of credibility, and still makes the concept exciting. For me, it was the centerpiece of a fine article--well researched & well thought out. As to his biased point of view, there is no such thing as real objectivity, so why pretend?

I think the interviews were the best part of the magazine. All three had a distinctive style, and weren't bothered by an amateurish, off-the-cuff quality. You really caught the essence of Ken Tobey in his interview. The whole thing seems to vibrate with his laconic thoroughness.

David Allen's piece was extremely provocative & intelligent. Altho I didn't agree with it all (e.g. "Max Steiner's score for KING IS...always sublimated...to the total effect."), I found many original ideas on a much-written subject.

The Fu Manchu article was fine--a good survey with simple criticism. However, I wished Mr. Parmun would have broadened his perspectives a bit, for I think that the cycle of Fu Manchu films is closely linked to the political position of China. Should China find a place in the Western community, can Fu Manchu, the ultimate Oriental threat, long survive? There is some evidence for this position (e.g. while Chiang Kai-Shek reigned, only a few films are made; as soon as Mao gains power in 1949, a Fu Manchu TV series (1950) arises. When the U.S. & China begin squaring off in Viet Nam (early to mid-sixties), England begins peddling Fu Manchu films in the U.S.. Now that the East is losing some of its hostility, and all of its mystery, Fu Manchu, politically & artistically, is dying. The I thought Mr. Parmun's work was very good, these "survey" works sorely need a unifying theme to maintain interest. Ron simply didn't have one for vampires, but Mr. Parmun did and I wished he had used it.

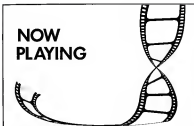
Frank Della Stritto  
Noboken, New Jersey

I must say that PHOTON #22 was extremely impressive, partly because of the adult approach it takes toward its subject matter and partly for its polished high quality. On the whole it was a pretty good job, what with its reviews, checklists and other sundry perverities too numerous to mention, making it worth every penny I paid for it, and other than a Sergio Corbucci western, I can't think of anything else in these times of incredible shrinking dollars and amazing colossal inflation that I can make a similar statement about.

Getting down to specifics, the cover painting of THE THING was a masterpiece of contrasting-yet-flowing light and shadow, and Wnoroski's article had the punch & enthusiasm all too frequently missing in fantasy film articles, which for years existed in the never-never land of "Gee Whizz. Mr. Harryhausen, how the hell did you do that?" and the colorless articles which occasionally pop up in "legit" publications like Films and Filming. I was surprised & happy that Jim gave HOWARD HAWKS the recognition he deserves for this film, which has as its theme the relationships between men that Hawks has explored countless times before, but never as abstractly as in THE THING where, if not a sexual alter ego, the creature itself is surely a metaphor of some sort for the Ken Tobey character. The thoroughness of the article was incredible, and the interview with Mr. Tobey a wise addendum. I'm sorry, though, that so much space was taken up conjecturing on who invented overlapping dialogues. It is pretty much agreed by almost all major film critics that Hawks was responsible, beginning with HIS GIRL FRIDAY which was made before CITIZEN KANE. It also worked perfectly in THE THING and other films, but never to better purpose than in HIS GIRL FRIDAY.

Unfortunately, Bob Sheridan missed the mark in trying to discover the reason for the success of INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. It was, shot for shot, scene for scene, a Don Siegel film. The treatment of

(continued on page 46)



# **DRACULA A.D. 1972**

1972

Warner Brothers. A Hammer Production; 100 mm; Produced by Josephine Douglas; Directed by Alan Gibson; Screenplay by Don Houghton; Dir. of Photography: Dick Bush, B.S.C.; Designer: Don Mingay; Editor: James Needs; Continuity: Doreen Dearmaly; Sound Editor: Roy Baker; Recording Dir: A.W. Lumkin; Dubbing Mixer: Bill Rowe; Casting: James Liggett; Music Composed by Michael Vickers; Musical Supervisor: Philip Martell; Songs: "Alligator Man" by Sal Valentino, "You Better Come Through" by Tim Barnes; Production Supervisor: Roy Skelga; Production Manager: Ron Jackson; Special Effects: Les Bowie; Makeup: Jill Carpenter; Hairdresser: Barbara Ritchie; Wardrobe Supervisor: Rosemary Burrows; Assistant Director: Robert Lynn.

Cast: Christopher Lee (Count Dracula), Peter Cushing (Prof. Van Helsing), Stephanie Beacham (Jessica Van Helsing), Christopher Neame (Johnny Alucard), Michael Coles (Inspector), William Ellis (Joe Mitchum), Marsha Hunt (Gwyneth), Janet Kay (Anna), Philip Miller (Bob), Michael Kitchen (Greg), David Andrews (Detective Sergeant), Caroline Munro (Laura), Lally Bowers (Matron), Rockgroup: Stoneground.

It is impossible for this writer to review DRACULA A.D. 1972 without marking it as the definitive example of the depths of decadence to which Hammer Films have fallen, but I will attempt to proceed without wallowing in a mire of nostalgia for the company's earlier greatness. Basically, the new film is an updated remake of Hammer's TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA, with elements of Stanley Kubrick's A CLOCKWORK ORANGE and Hitchcock's PRETTY THING thrown in for good measure.

As far as I could determine, the film does not contain any significant original touches. Its major claim to fame, that of placing Dracula in modern times, echoes such recent productions as BLACULA and TV's THE NIGHT STALKER, as well as the 1958 THE RETURN OF DRACULA. In this case, however, the gimmick remains a gimmick...nothing more...for Dracula himself never comes in contact with modern civilization. Instead, he remains cooped up in a desecrated church, sending his disciple out to do all of the legwork for him. This leaves Christopher Lee, apparently unable to think of anything else to do, offering his tried and true "stand around and look noble"-routine, suggesting a mere cardboard cut-out of himself from an earlier film.

DRACULA A.D. 1972 is the sixth Hammer film in which Lee has portrayed Dracula, and its bland and rehearsed approach to the character of the bloody count is certainly sufficient to excuse Lee for his worst performance to date in this role. The entire film is a shambles, and it must be reported (however reluctantly) that Lee is unable to salvage his own scenes, much less the picture. On the other hand, Peter Cushing, playing not one but two Van Helsing's, achieves at least personal success. Admittedly, Cushing has a few advantages. Firstly, this is only the third film in which he has assumed this role, the previous one, BRIDES OF DRACULA, having been made a dozen years prior to the current release. Further, the particular Van Helsing character whom Cushing portrayed in the earlier films appears only briefly this time. For the most part, Cushing plays a descendant of the original character, one lacking the absolute self-confidence of his famous ancestor. Thus, he has at least a bit of a chance to create a new characterization. He also

has screen time to work with and, as always, does the best that can be done with the material.

The rest of the cast is relatively anonymous, mainly struggling with the awful dialogue. The police speak lines that had to be dusted off before being used, due to their age, while the "swinging youth" suit most embarrassingly unconvincing slang. The only exception to this mediocrity is Christopher Neame's portrayal of Dracula's disciple, Johnny Alucard (get that one, SON OF DRACULA fans?). Neame is the most stupendously inadequate actor Hammer has presented since they replaced Cushing with Ralph Bates in THE HORROR OF FRANKENSTEIN. Neame is blessed (?) with the picture's single worst line ("Dig the music, kids!" shouted at a satanic ritual) but carries on, hamming humorlessly throughout, in seeming ignorance of the film's shortcomings, not to mention his own.

DRACULA A.D. 1972 is the first film in the Hammer series to depart from the sequel format used previously. Dracula is not resurrected from his demise at the conclusion of SCARS OF DRACULA, which thus may stand as the final episode in Hammer's continuing adventures of Dracula. Conspicuously absent from the credits of the current release is the name Anthony Munds (John Elder); also absent (unfortunately) is James Bernard, replaced here by ex-Namfrod Mann member Mike Vickers, whose score is typified by supporting the film's climactic battle between Dracula and Van Helsing with a fast rock tune. Speaking of rock, the film features a totally superfluous party sequence at which the group Stoneground performs. Originally, the Faces were set to appear in this scene. They could not have made it any more relevant to the movie, but at least they would

*BELOW: One might have hoped that the reunion between Cushing & Lee in the roles they created for HORROR OF DRACULA would have seen better results than DRACULA A.D. 1972. BOTTOM: Lee and buncie Stephanie Beacham in a scene from the film.*





LEFT: Ingrid Pitt, as the Countess Elizabeth Bathory, learns the hard way that only the blood of a virgin will make her young and beautiful again in *COUNTRESS DRACULA*. ABOVE: The Burgermeister (Thorley Walters) is attacked by Count Mitterhouse (Robert Young), as Harley (Laurence Payne) drives a stake through the vampire, killing him (from *VAMPIRE CIRCUS*).

have been more musically and visually interesting than the rather ordinary group used in their place.

Director Alan Gibson, whose track record in the field consists of *GOODBYE GENET* and *CRESCENDO*, must bear the brunt of the blame for the film's failure. His style is marked by an over-abundance of flashy techniques—wide-angle panning shots, fast cross-cutting—which lead to no conclusion. In other words, he is impossible to distinguish from any other modern cinema hack. His infantile insistence on cutting back and forth from one scene to another, rather than allow any particular sequence to run its course uninterrupted, indicates the assumption of a lack of attention span on the part of his audience or, perhaps, on the part of the director himself. A number of scenes which apparently could have held a modicum of interest are thus rendered ineffectual. Much excitement and suspense are totally lacking.

Warner Brothers, distributors of *DRACULA A.D.* 1972, have announced that Hammer is shooting a sequel: *DRACULA IS DEAD...AND WELL AND LIVING IN LONDON*, again starring Lee & Cushing. We can only hope that this modern-day Dracula series runs a course opposite to that of the previous saga, which moved downhill with some consistency with each new film. --Bob Sheridan

#### VAMPIRE CIRCUS 1971

20th Century-Fox. A Hammer Film Production; 87 minutes; Produced by Wilbur Stark; Production Supervisor: Roy Skeggs; Production Manager: Tom Sachs; Assistant Director: Derek Whitehurst; Directed by Robert Young; Screenplay by Judson Klaberg, based on the story by George Baxt and Wilbur Stark; Director of Photography: Moray Grant; Editor: Peter Musgrave; Art Direction: Scott McGregor; Music: David Whitaker; Musical Direction: Philip Martell; Set Decorations: Claude Hitchcock; Technical Advisor: Mary Chiffersfield.

Cast: Adrienne Corri (Gypsy Woman), Laurence Payne (Mueller), Thorley Walters (Burgermeister), John Noulter Brown (Anton Karsh), Lynne Frederick (Dora Mueller), Elizabeth Seal (Gerta Hauser), Anthony Corlan (Emil), Richard Owens (Dr. Karsh), Doreen Blythe (Anna Mueller), Robin Hunter (Hauser), Robert Taysan (Count Mitterhouse), Mary Wimbush (Elvira), Lalla Ward (Helga), Robin Sachs (Heinrich), Dave Brown (Strongman), Roderick Shaw (Jon Hauser), Barabry Shaw (Gustav Hauser), Christina Paul (Nora), Jane Darby (Jenny), Skip Martin (Michael), Milovan

and Serena (The Webbers), John Brown (Schilt), Sibylla Kay (Mrs. Schilt), Dorothy Frere (Grandma Schilt), Jason James (Foreman), Arnold Locke (Old Villager), Bradford and Amoro (Helga & Heinrich's Doubles).

Currently co-billed with *COUNTRESS DRACULA*, this more recent Hammer outing was completed in 1971 and is no doubt the better of the duo—although readers will ultimately have to decide for themselves whether this analogy is comparable to the sublime choice between a headache and an upset stomach. Like *COUNTRESS DRACULA*, Fox has again elected to trim *CIRCUS* of its nudity and violence to get that all-important GP rating. The cutting is detectable to the discerning eye in the former film, but is blatantly obvious to all in *VAMPIRE CIRCUS*; a picture that was primarily had to appeal to our perverse and prurient interests.

As it stands now, the film satisfies neither our lust for sex nor taste for killing, and isn't even very good children's entertainment to boot.

Filled with frenzied jump cuts and all too obvious fades and dissolves tacked on in post production, the screenplay is unique enough to sustain the viewer through the more murky moments. Not since *KISS OF THE VAMPIRE* has there been a more novel mode of presenting the usual vampire tale of vengeance, this time told with a band of the undead traveling the Bavarian village route under the guise of circus performers—performers with unbelievable acts that at once both horrify and hypnotize the beguiled townspeople. A la Dr. Niemann's side show in Universal's *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, the show people go undetected and wherever they go death is sure to follow.

Director Robert Young (his name getting a surge of laughter from the American audience who believes him to be the actor portraying Marcus Welby), in his first feature, manages to instill an unearthly sense of fairy tale atmosphere in the production. Oblivious to the danger they're in, the villagers watch in awe as the performers change into bats and leopards before their eyes or venture into the tent of mirrors where their own doom is revealed to them.

More damaging than the censorship and more detrimental than the low budget is the adolescent and amateurish acting talent that gives this British picture the "teenage" look so common to our own films during the fifties. Outside of the accents and longer hair styles, we could be watching people the likes of Fabian and John Ashley. Robert Taysan is convincing as Count Mitterhouse, exuding a sensuality not unlike David Peel in *BRIDES OF DRACULA*. In fact, as in *KISS OF THE VAMPIRE*, the sexual connotations of vampirism are explored rather freely. --Jim Woroski

# COUNTRESS BATHORY

1971  
 Hammer Film Production; Directed by Peter Sasdy;  
 Director of Photography: Ken Talbot; Art Director:  
 Philip Harrison; Musical Supervisor: Philip Martell;  
 Production Manager: Christopher Sutton; First Asst.  
 Director: Ariel Levy; Camera Operator: Ken Withers;  
 Costume Designer: Raymond Hughes; Edited by Henry  
 Richardson; Makeup by Tom Smith; Sound Mixer: Kevin  
 Sutton.

Cast: Ingrid Pitt (Countess Elizabeth Bathory),  
 Nigel Green (Capt. Dobi), Sander Eiles (Lieutenant  
 Ivar Toth), Maurice Denham, Patience Collier, Lesley-  
 Anne Down, Peter Jeffrey, Jessie Evans.

After an engagingly erotic appearance in THE  
 VAMPIRE LOVER, the beautiful Ingrid Pitt has fan-  
 tastically returned to American shores in her second Ham-  
 mer outing as the evil Countess Bathory in COUNTRESS  
 BATHORY. Originally filmed two years ago on the  
 heels of THE HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD, it has taken  
 until now to obtain a U.S. distributor.

What has happened in that two year span is a  
 strange phenomenon indeed--the picture has garnered  
 an American reputation as a classic of classical prop-  
 erties, with a wealth of advance promotional flyers,  
 stills and even a movie-edition paperback.

According to history, the Bathory family ruled  
 Transylvania during the 16th century. Sigismund  
 Bathory, who was considered insane, caused civil war  
 and foreign invasions to devastate Transylvania.  
 Elizabeth, about whom little is known, was killed in  
 prison, accused of the murder of 600 virgins in  
 whose blood she allegedly bathed in an effort to  
 rejuvenate herself.

Ingrid Pitt is again at her loveliest (at least  
 some of the time) as the Countess, but not even her  
 sensual film presence can tide the viewer through  
 this awfully dull and over-the-top film.

The story is treated with all the delicacy of a pick  
 with Peter Sasdy moving his characters around as if  
 he was playing an erratic game of checkers--to lose!  
 Credit must go to Philip Harrison's art di-  
 rection, however, for giving the film its authentic  
 period atmosphere. In addition, Nigel Green gives  
 a fine performance as Captain Dobi, trying to  
 remain proud while at the emotional mercy of the  
 mad Countess.

What had promised to be the film's major  
 redeeming quality, Ms. Pitt's enticing nude scenes,  
 have been excised by Fox to obtain the picture's  
 GP rating. Ditto for the violent episodes. What's  
 left is a huge-podgy and over-the-top picture that,  
 aside from the movie's basic vampiric content,  
 could scarcely be labeled a "horror" film...  
 more a mid-evil version of AS THE WORLD TURNS.

--Jim Vorel

# FELINI SATYRICON

1973  
 United Artists. Produced by Alberto Grimaldi,  
 directed by Federico Fellini; Screenplay by Fellini  
 and Bernardino Zapponi with the collaboration of  
 Brunello Rondi; Director of Photography: Giuseppe  
 Rotunno; Art Directors: Donato Donati & Luigi  
 Scacalano; Music: Nino Rota, Ilhan Mizaroglu,  
 Tod Dockstader & Andrew Rudin; Makeup: Rino Carbone.  
 In Technicolor; 136 minutes.

Cast: Martin Potter (Asclepio), Miran Kellar  
 (Ascleto), Max Born (Gittone), Silvio Randone (Rusulphus)  
 Mario Romagnoli (Trimaichio), Nagai Noel (Fortuna-  
 ti), Capucine (Tryphaena), Alain Cuny (Lichas),  
 Pasquella (Vermaichio).

In San Diego, in a small art theater operating  
 in conjunction with a book-and-record store, a film  
 is being shown. The director of the picture is getting  
 made-up, and act; a stout, somber man in a black  
 fedora shouts and gesticulates in Italian and  
 English; whores, freaks and crazy people have a field  
 day wandering thru the biggest collection of archaic  
 sets since BEN-HUR. The man in the fedora is  
 Fellini. The film is on the making of Fellini's  
 SATYRICON. The director of the autograph is Gideon  
 Brachman, who stands out in front of the theater  
 after the screening and answers questions.

The clientele of the theater (the Unicorn) comes  
 in all shapes & sizes, but has one distinct tenden-  
 cy--artistic snobbery. In the question & answer  
 period, Brachman is assailed with bombastic reactions  
 to his film, questions such as "What do you think  
 of involving yourself in a picture that is essentially a pro-  
 cess about a process?" and other types which I  
 understand, but tend to regard as so much intellec-  
 tual baroque.

The build-down extract of the affair (like glue)  
 is that Brachman didn't like SATYRICON, is disres-  
 at Fellini's breakaway from realistic themes (LA STRADA,  
 ROMA LA BOUCE, etc.) and made his own film as a ques-  
 satire of Fellini's current tendencies. He also intended  
 to make it a television show, but things got carried  
 away during filming. American television found an even  
 milder special on SATYRICON to be snathena-Bachmann's  
 film would have controlled the innocent brains of millions.

Throughout the viewing and questioning, my little  
 is concluded, and some audience members have allowed  
 their tempers to flare.

Fellini, in his current phase, baffles even the  
 Literati, but enters our realm of delight--the surreal  
 and fantastic. Even more to his credit, he does it  
 with a superb taste and great restraint. FELLINI SATYRICON  
 is, at its worst, a satirical & satirical & satirical  
 best, it presents a variety of images, ideas & historical  
 dreams which have an unexcelled, incredible beauty.  
 Fellini does things with people, color & surrealism  
 (in both the old sense, as super-realism, and the new)  
 which have seldom been attempted before. He refers to  
 the ancient, historical, and satirical fiction, and once  
 seriously thought of casting Boris Karloff as the  
 Lee in starring roles. I emphasize "seriously" because  
 before filming began he announced he was casting every-  
 body from the Beatles to Lyndon Johnson.

There is a flood of symbolism and hidden intent  
 throughout the picture. People are made up to look  
 as if they were just stepped out of a cracked  
 fresco wall, conjured up from the past. The story  
 of history as experienced thru Fellini. Distorted people,  
 like distorted characters in a dream, show up throughout  
 the film. Emotional distortions, physical distortions,  
 nymphomaniacs, epileptics, enormous fat-draped spheroids,  
 a libellous torso, an ostrich-leg, an hermaphrodite (one  
 of the few characters that isn't what he actually appears;  
 rather, an albino with inner organs that the people seen  
 through the warped glass of age, faces covered in  
 affront the viewer in a thick, fleshy rain, and all  
 around the past hangs in racks & shards, fragmentary.

There is no linear plot to the film. The three main  
 characters, Incipilus (Martin Potter, English), Ascleto  
 (Miran Kellar, American), and Gittone (Max Born, English)  
 are secondary points-of-view figures, and the picture is  
 what the "dreamer" of the past sees. They are devoid of  
 human pretension; they wander like innocents, crafty  
 animals through a world, not mad, but lacking in sanity  
 and organization; a world, many people have said, as  
 disgusting and decadent as our own. These people voice  
 an interpretation of SATYRICON as a mirror of the present)  
 which cannot be legitimately dismissed as a mere  
 it's hackneyed & weak--practically every culture  
 thinks of itself as decadent. To say that Fellini made  
 SATYRICON in order to mimic Western decadence is to  
 underestimate him shamefully. SATYRICON doesn't voice  
 a message of doom & despair. In the midst of humanity,  
 wallowing the audience in everything they could con-  
 sider evil beyond words, it shows that in man the devil  
 will never entirely have his due.

Incipilus & Ascleto, despite innumerable cruelties  
 inflicted upon one another, remain companions of a  
 sort (that is, homosexual) throughout the film. Gittone,  
 a pretty immoral prostitute, remains aloof, and is  
 never blind by proximity; he slip-tosses thru the muck,  
 in situation ethics all the time. They wander through a  
 Rome that is more than Rome, and more than history. It's  
 all civilizations, past & present, seen through the fog  
 of human wishful-thinking.

All the characters in the SATYRICON, at their very  
 lowest, retain a sense of aloofness that would infuriate  
 the gods & satyrs alike, for they take part in a life  
 with no obligations to anyone. And hardly any toward  
 themselves, other than staying alive--in one scene,  
 not even that.

After the assassination of a ghostly adolescent-  
 like Caesar, a noble family in a white villa draped  
 with willows sends its children away with the slaves.  
 The soldiers of the new Emperor are coming to arrest  
 them. In the cloudy, peaceful presence of the villa,  
 the master slits his wrists and stays with the wife  
 as his life drains away. (This could be Fellini's  
 homage to the author of the now-fragmentary SATYRICON,  
 Gaius Petronius, the Arbiter. Petronius slit his  
 wrists, then rebound them to talk with his friends  
 before finishing his suicide.) My wife then stabs  
 herself, and the peace of the villa--the only pure  
 place in the film--is completely destroyed. It seems  
 to have acknowledged gracefully the scene, the  
 setting and characters in the villa, then just as  
 gleefully given everybody the Emperor's thumbs-down.

The making of SATYRICON was as interesting, appar-



ently, as the film itself. All movies have a self-style about their productions, and the SATYRICON was something of a cross between B&H-HU and the Marx Brothers. To view the film is to sometimes not believe that actors would consent to do some of the things portrayed--the disbelief is easier to squelch these days--yet they did, and remained reasonably human & characteristic. Bachmann's film shows agents haggling, set designers throwing up their arms in despair at Fellini's last-minute changes, actors haggling, Fellini casting self-conscious glances at Bachmann's cameras, extras haggling, and make-up artists disgusting themselves.

Max Born was wary of unknowing photographers who approached him for cheesecake shots, only to find he wasn't a she--a problem which also resulted in feisty Italians referring to him as a fairy or worse. Yet, according to Bachmann, Born was the only member of the major cast to get it on with a girl on the set (how far, he didn't mention). The others were generally too self-engrossed. Hiram Keller, growing disgusted at Bachmann's ever-prying camera eye, used a paragraph redolent with "fucks" to ruin any chances Bachmann had of showing it on TV. The sequence was kept in.

Fellini asked everybody how their love-life was. "Did you make love last night?"

Photographers, journalists, theologians & sight-seers from the world over dropped in on Cinecittà to view the filming. Fellini didn't mind. He yelled at everybody in general. According to people who have worked with him for a long time, even a short time, it's his way of being friendly. The shooting may have looked disorganized, but in the mind of Fellini it came together, gelled, absorbed oxygen like oil on canvas, and took on life. Dreams arise from their grayish-pink graves and revel in life. Frescoes stand up and speak, voices hoary with time. Nightmare monsters become sympathetic innocents intent on life.

In the end, all return to stone & the past, re-absorbed onto their fresco walls, once conjured, now quiescent. The past, eternally flowing behind itself with further pasts, is put away and the present goes about its business once more.

Becoming the past. --Greg Bear

#### THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED

1971  
[Spanish title: LA RESIDENCIA]. An Anabel Films (Madrid) production, copyright 1969. Released in the US by American International, 1971. Directed by Narciso Ibanez Serrador; Screenplay by Luis Penafiel; Based on a story by Juan Tebar; Camera (Eastmancolor, AIP prints by MovieLab, Francopac 70m), Manuel Berenguer; Music: Waldo de los Rios; Assistant Director: Mahnahen Velasco; Edited by Mercedes Olmos; 104 minutes; MPAA Rating: "GP".

Cast: Lillit Palmer (Senora Fourneau), Cristina Galbo (Teresa), John Moulder Brown (Luis), Mary Maude (Irene), Candida Lozada (Generosa Despres), Tomas Blanco (Pedro Balido), Maribel Martin (Isabel), Pauline Chailleur (Catalina), Teresa Hurtado (Andrea), Conchita Paredes (Susana), Victor Israel (Brechard).

One of the very few worthwhile terror excursions seen in this country during the 1971 film season was a 1969 Spanish production entitled LA RESIDENCIA (THE BOARDING SCHOOL). The film, which was very capably directed by Spain's fright special-

(continued on page 47)

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# THE INVISIBLE MAN, a retrospective by.... paul jensen

When DRACULA proved highly successful (in the Spring of 1931), Universal immediately began planning a series of similar films. FRANKENSTEIN was the first to go before the cameras, followed soon after by MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE. At about the same time as MURDERS was being planned, an adaptation of H.C. Wells' THE INVISIBLE MAN was also receiving serious consideration. Late in 1931, Universal's publicity department described Robert Florey as the studio's "gasp expert", on the now-tenuous basis of his adaptation of FRANKENSTEIN and direction of the not-yet-released MURDERS, and announced that he would both write and direct THE INVISIBLE MAN! From then on, the story was conceived as a vehicle for Boris Karloff.

By January, 1932, Garrett Fort was being listed as scriptwriter, though Florey was still to direct.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, of course, R.C. Sherriff became the credited author, James Whale directed, and Florey was no longer connected with the project -- a fact which must have galled him quite a bit, having already lost FRANKENSTEIN to Whale just a year before. But once again Florey's loss turned out to be the moviegoers' gain.

Because of these changes and the considerable time lapse between the film's conception and its materialization, the background of THE INVISIBLE MAN is complex and obscure. Still, it is possible to reconstruct some of it from the information available. First, it must be remembered that filmmakers have always had to prepare several projects simultaneously, without knowing for certain which, if any, will finally go before the cameras. In the Hollywood studio system of the early thirties, this was especially true, with staff writers and directors assigned as teams on in series to projects that might never be made, or might be made by someone else several years later. By the time a director started shooting, any number of other hands and minds had already been at work shaping the idea. In this way, actions that were originally quite independent of THE INVISIBLE MAN eventually had considerable effect on the production of that film.

Early in 1931, Universal decided to film THE ROAD BACK, Erich Maria Remarque's sequel to his ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, which the studio released to critical acclaim and popular success the year before. Lewis Milestone, the director of

ALL QUIET, was approached to handle the sequel, but he was busy working for Howard Hughes and so declined the offer; one report, though, added that Milestone's salary was now greater than what Universal wanted to pay at that point in the Depression. Since James Whale was already on studio contract, he seemed the next logical choice. After all, his initial success had been as director of the stage and screen versions of JOURNEY'S END; he had also been "dialogue director" on HELL'S ANGELS; and he had just finished directing WATERLOO BRIDGE. All three of these stories dealt with the Great War, and it was JOURNEY'S END that had inspired the series of war films that included ALL QUIET. Besides this filmic experience, Whale had fought in the trenches of France, and had been captured and held a prisoner of war in Germany, so his affinity for the subject was obvious; he was, in fact, on the verge of being typed as a war specialist. Universal still hesitated to make the film, however, because of its high budget and the difficulty in getting a satisfactory script, so THE ROAD BACK kept being postponed and re-routed.

In the meantime, Whale took on FRANKENSTEIN (a change-of-pace from war films if ever there was one), which he shot in the late Summer of 1931. Then, during January, 1932, he directed a romantic comedy with a hospital setting, called IMPATIENT MAIDEN. With the financial returns of FRANKENSTEIN far outdistancing those of DRACULA, the confidence that the lazzies had placed in Whale was confirmed, so the director successfully suggested that his friend R.C. Sherriff -- author of JOURNEY'S END -- be urged to write the script of the Remarque work. Sherriff had recently published a highly popular novel, The Fortnight in September, and then had entered Oxford University to study history, with a view toward becoming a schoolmaster. Universal's offer was an attractive one: travel expenses to Hollywood and a salary of \$1,500 per week for four months' work. An author who had found himself outstandingly successful as both playwright and novelist, Sherriff nonetheless felt frustrated at not creating an accepted follow-up in either form; so the opportunity to exercise his talent in a new medium -- as well as the money and the chance to visit California -- appealed to him, and he took a leave of absence from Oxford and went West.<sup>3</sup>

In the interim, Universal had bought the



The stranger arrives at the inn. *THE INVISIBLE MAN* is introduced to movie audiences for the first time

rights to a novel, *The Murderer Invisible* by Philip Wylie, which had a basic situation similar to that in Wells' book, and the studio announced that the film being planned would be a combination of both works. The final credits, however, made no mention of it, and when this writer asked Sherriff, in August, 1971, about the situation, he replied that he had never encountered the Wylie book. Sherriff suggested that the studio had purchased the rights solely to avoid any possibility of a plagiarism suit. Such cases were not uncommon at the time, and Sherriff himself had encountered one regarding *JOURNEY'S END*; generally, the parties settled out-of-court to avoid adverse publicity, a result anticipated by the complainant. No doubt this was at least partly the reason, especially since *THE MURDERER INVISIBLE* had just been published in 1931, and might (perhaps with some accuracy) be viewed as the inspiration for the film. Also, the appearance and manner of Wylie's main character were better suited to the Karloff "style" than Griffin's in *The Invisible Man*, so the studio may in fact have considered cross-breeding Wylie and Wells, until Sherriff arrived intending to stick to the original. (Carlos Clavero, in *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, and Scott MacQueen, in *Sore Creatures*, state that Wylie actually revised the script, but I have found no source supporting this assumption.)

With Sherriff preparing to adapt *The Road Back* and Universal purchasing *The Murderer Invisible*, Whale started work on his next film, *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*. This one had been scripted by Benn Levy, another playwright with whom Whale had worked in London during the twenties; its original source was a novel by J.B. Priestley, called *Benighted* in England and *The Old Dark House* in America. The film was shot in April, 1932, and it was about that time that Sherriff arrived in Hollywood, accompanied by his mother, whom he had brought along for a vacation. "We were still unpacking," says Sherriff in his autobiography, "when Whale came in to see us with a bottle of whiskey. It was a timely gift, because we liked our evening tail and prohibition was still in full swing out there."<sup>4</sup>

Sherriff was given an office and secretary on the Universal lot, but preferred to do his writing at home, in the evenings. At Whale's suggestion, he would arrive in the morning, give the secretary the night's work to type, then observe the workings of the studio until noon, when he would leave, having put in his "official" time.<sup>5</sup> As a result, he was often on the set of *The Old Dark House*, and since Benn Levy had already returned to England, Sherriff was occasionally consulted for spur-of-the-moment dialogue changes. While Sherriff was working on *THE ROAD BACK*, Whale suggested following that script with one for *THE INVISIBLE MAN*, and when ROAD was completed, Universal offered the writer a longer contract.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of adapting Wells' novel attracted Sherriff: "I'd read the book as a boy. It had thrilled me, and I'd never forgotten it. If I'd been given a free choice I couldn't have chosen a more tempting story." He was anxious, however, to return home, so the studio agreed to let him do most of the writing in England, with a stipulation that he return to Hollywood for conferences at the completion of each script. Sherriff accepted this offer, and *THE INVISIBLE MAN* was written near London, in the study of his home in the country -- although he and Whale evidently spent considerable time discussing the project before Sherriff left the States.

In September, 1932, Whale returned from a trip to England that had combined a vacation and conferences with Sherriff, and he was prepared to start directing *THE ROAD BACK*. But the studio wasn't. Instead, Whale eventually set to work directing *THE KISS BEFORE THE MIRROR*, a stylish melodrama that was shot in December, 1932, and released the following April. Early in 1933, Universal decided to film *THE RETURN OF FRANKENSTEIN*. According to Sherriff, Whale was violently against the project. "The idea of making a sequel to it (FRANKENSTEIN) repelled him. 'They're always like that,' he said. 'If they score a hit with a picture they always want to do it again.... They've had a script made for a sequel and it stinks to heaven. In any case I squeezed the idea dry on the original picture, and never want to work on it again.'" Whale pinned his hope of avoiding that film on *THE INVISIBLE MAN*, but so many staff writers had failed to concoct a workable script that it seemed impossible.

By June, 1933, Sherriff had produced a script for *THE INVISIBLE MAN* which more than satisfied Whale and the Laemles. As Variety reported, "What Universal regards as the perfect screen version of a novel is R.C. Sherriff's script of H. G. Wells' story *THE INVISIBLE MAN*, just completed without benefit of studio supervision, and 5,000 miles from the nearest Universal exec.... Studio executives began to mope as the script came in sequence by sequence, and now it's being touted." Sherriff then returned to Hollywood with the finished work, received praise from innumerable executives, and became for the time being "the golden boy of the studio." Whale was especially pleased, because now the *Frankenstein* sequel was definitely shelved, and he could set to work on *THE INVISIBLE MAN*.

(Sherriff's autobiography seems to imply that he had originally been called to Hollywood to script *THE INVISIBLE MAN*, that he had done so while there, and that *THE ROAD BACK* had been written on his return to England. During my interview with him, however, he went into greater detail about the order of events, and this clarification is incorporated in the above account.)

In May, 1933, Boris Karloff returned from his first visit to England in many years, having just completed *THE DRUGGIST* there. At the time, Universal still expected to star him in *THE INVISIBLE MAN*, but trouble soon arose. The studio, pleading Depression poverty, refused to pay him a raise that had been written into his contract, so Karloff walked out. This left Whale quite literally with an invisible man for his lead, and only a short time before shooting was scheduled to start. Whale offered the role to Colin Clive, another friend and the star of *JOURNEY'S END* (on stage and in the film)

and of FRANKENSTEIN. Clive had just finished appearing in CHRISTOPHER STRONG for RKO and SERVICE (LOOKING FORWARD) for MGM. Anxious to get back to England and his wife, Clive preferred to take the next ship home, "though the part appealed to him as being 'down his street.'" Colin Clive gets a kick out of playing parts like his grim role in FRANKENSTEIN, stated an article in a British Film magazine at the time. "He certainly does not see himself as a leading man or a Romantic lover. He wants the strong stuff."<sup>10</sup>

In his search for another candidate, Whale watched a screen test that Claude Rains had made for RKO's A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT; Rains has described it as "the worst screen test in the history of movie-making," and declared that when Whale saw it he "howled with laughter." "However, Rains was not totally an unknown quantity, having been fairly prominent on the London stage in the mid-twenties, when Whale himself had been working there as an actor, set designer, and assistant director. Rains preceded Whale to America, where he established himself anew on Broadway, especially in the prestigious Theatre Guild productions. Financial remuneration, though, was not the equal of prestige. Whale had Rains make a test for the role of the lawless Man -- the scene in which he describes to Dr. Kemp his plan for controlling the world -- and he was signed, at virtually the last moment.

But to get Rains, the studio had to agree to give him star billing,<sup>11</sup> an unusual situation for

such a filmic novice, and this caused the already-sighed Chester Morris to balk at being co-starred and to leave the cast.<sup>12</sup> At close to the same time, Whale cast Una O'Connor as the innkeeper's wife, which meant getting her out of Fox's PADDY THE NEXT BEST THING.<sup>13</sup> She too had been noticeable on the London stage, in supporting roles, throughout the twenties, until she came to Hollywood to appear in the film of Noel Coward's play CAVALCADE (1933). The presence in the cast of Rains, O'Connor, and numerous British character actors helped give the INVISIBLE MAN the all-British texture that the story required; it also gave Whale the sense that he was surrounded by kindred spirits, and even in some cases old acquaintances, which he needed in order to work at his best.

Shooting began at the end of June, 1933, and wasn't completed until late August. This was a long period, by the standards of the early thirties, but a technician's strike during that time probably contributed to the undue length. The release date was first set as August 24, but new ones kept being announced: October 2, October 16, October 30. The film was finally put into release in November. The cause of this delay was the meticulous laboratory work required to create the effect of invisibility. Of course, the scenes in which the character was totally invisible necessitated only that objects be manipulated by fine wires, while those in which he is totally clothed and bandaged posed no technical difficulties at all. The in-between shots of him partly clothed or in the act of unbandaging himself caused the most trouble. Several articles have attempted to describe the techniques involved, but mostly they seem derived from the only "authoritative" one, which was written by John P. Fulton, Universal's specialist in photographic effects, for The American Cinematographer (September, 1934).

For the partly-clothed footage, writes Fulton,

BELOW: Una O'Connor, most famous, perhaps, for her ear-piercing scream, plays Mrs. Hall, the innkeeper's wife. BOTTOM: In a particularly well-remembered sequence, Mrs. Hall surprises the Invisible Man while he is eating. The jawless effect is achieved by having Claude Rains wear black velvet, over which the bandages are wrapped. The scene is shot against a black background, then combined with the real background via optical printing.





we had recourse to multiple-printing -- with variations. Most of these scenes involved other normal characters, so we photographed these scenes in the normal manner, but without any trace of the invisible man. All of the action, of course, had to be carefully timed, as in any sort of double exposure work. This negative was then developed in the normal manner. Then the special-process work began. We used a completely black set -- walled and floored with black velvet, to be as nearly non-reflective as possible. Our actor was garbed from head to foot in black velvet tights, with black gloves, and a black headpiece rather like a diver's helmet. Over this, he wore whatever clothes might be required. This gave us a picture of the unsupported clothes moving around on a dead black field. From this negative, we made a print, and a duplicate negative, which we intensified to serve as mattes for printing. Then, with an ordinary printer, we proceeded to make our composite: first we printed from the positive of the background and normal action, using the intensified, negative matte to mask off the area where our invisible man's clothing was to move. Then we printed again, using the positive matte to shield the already printed area, and printing in the moving clothes from our 'trick' negative. This printing operation made our duplicate, composite negative to be used in printing the final master-prints of the picture.

"The chief difficulty we encountered in these scenes was not primarily photographic, but had to do with acting and direction -- getting the player to move naturally, yet in a manner which did not present, for example, an open sleeve-end to the camera. This required endless rehearsal, endless patience -- and many 'takes.' In many scenes, too, we had to figure out ways of getting natural-looking movement without having our 'invisible' actor pass his hands in front of himself.

"In several sequences, the player had to be shown unwrapping the concealing bandages from about his head; and in another, pulling off a false nose, revealing the absolute emptiness of the head-swathings, the back of which showed through when the nose was removed. The latter scene was made by using a dummy, an exact replica of the player's make-up, and with a chest ingeniously contrived to



LEFT: The studio publicity department saw fit to outline the features of the Invisible Man in several publicity stills. ABOVE: The inkkeeper (played by Forester Harvey) provides yet another distraction for the mysterious stranger.

move as though breathing. (In the close up of the dummy used, the chest is not shown.) The unwrapping action was handled in the same fashion as the other half-clad scenes -- that is, by multiple printing with travelling mattes. Here, again, we had considerable trouble in getting the actor to move naturally, yet without ever passing his hands in front of himself. In some of these scenes, it was possible to leave small eye-holes in the helmet, through which the player could see; but in others -- especially the close shots of the unwrapping action -- this was impossible, and the player had to work 'blind.' Air had to be supplied through tubes, as in a diving-suit -- but the tubes were concealed, usually running up a trouser-leg. On at least one occasion, either the air-supply failed, or the mid-summer heat (aided, of course, by the heat of the lamps) overcame the player and he fainted in the middle of a scene....

"In nearly all of these scenes, though they were made silent, it was difficult -- sometimes impossible -- to direct the actor, for the helmet muffled the sound from outside, and the air-tubes made a roaring rumble in his ears, which drowned out any sounds which might filter through the padding. When I used a large megaphone, and shouted at the top of my voice, he could just barely hear a faint murmur! Accordingly, we had to rehearse and rehearse -- and then make many 'takes,' as a rule, by 'Take 20' of any such scene, we felt ourselves merely well started toward getting our shot!

"The two principal difficulties, photographic ally speaking, were watching up the lighting on the visible parts of my shot with the general lighting used by Arthur Edson, A.S.C., for the normal parts of the picture; and eliminating the various little imperfections -- such as the eye-holes, etc. -- which were naturally picked up by the camera. This latter was done by retouching the film -- frame by frame -- with a brush and opaque dye. We photographed thousands of feet of film in the many 'takes' of the different scenes, and approximately 4,000 feet of film received individual hand-work treatment in some degree, making approximately 64,000 frames which were individually retouched in this manner! (This estimate seems exaggerated, since 64,000 frames would be about 45 minutes, whereas the special effects occupy, at most, 15 minutes of footage.)

"One of the later sequences of the picture showed the flight of the invisible man across the snow, his movements being traced by the appearance of footprints in the snow. As other actors appeared in these shots, we could not make the footprints appear by using 'stop-motion,' so instead we dug a trench along the line where we

wanted the footprints, and covered the trench with a board, in which the footprints had been cut. The footprint-openings were filled with the wooden outlines which had been cut to make the footprints: these were supported by pegs extending to the bottom of the trench, and a rope was looped around the pegs, so that pulling upon it would pull out the pegs, and cause the outlines to drop away from the board. The board was then covered with the snow-material: and as we shot the scene, we pulled on the rope, pulling out the pegs, and causing the snow to drop down through the holes, giving us perfect footprints.

"Another scene that was difficult was one in which the invisible man unwrapped the bandages from his head before a mirror: the shot had to show the man himself (from the rear) and his reflection in the mirror. Ordinarily, this would be simple enough-- but when you add to it the difficulties incident to showing the unwrapping of an invisible head, you have some rather complicated problems to solve! This required the making of four separate 'takes', which were combined, by the travelling-matte printing system already outlined, into a single picture. First, there was the shot of the wall and the mirror, with the mirror itself masked out by black velvet; next, a separate shot of the opposite wall of the room, as reflected in the mirror; thirdly, the shot of the invisible man, from the rear, unwrapping his bandages, and lastly, the reflection of him, from the front, doing the same act. All of these had to be perfectly coordinated-- matched in viewpoint, perspective and action to a fraction of an inch. Several of the negatives required hand retouching; and last-- but far from least-- the action had to be figured out so that the hands of the actor did not pass between himself and the camera, or between the 'reflection' and the camera. It was as difficult a shot as I have ever made. (The problem of the actor's hands, however, was solved by having the character wear gloves.)

"The final shots of the picture were also interesting-- and difficult. The invisible man is shown in a hospital bed, dying; and as he dies, the effect of the drug slowly vanishes, and we see him at last, as he really is. Upon the screen, we first see only the bed-- we are looking straight down upon it from above, and we see the depression made in the pillow by the invisible head, and the folds of the sheets and blankets over the unseen form. Slowly a suggestion of bone-structure appears-- then a full skeleton-- then slowly traces of flesh-- then skin-- and finally we see the man himself. This was done directly

in the camera. First, we showed the bed, occupied by its invisible patient: the pillow, indentation and all, was made of plaster, and the blankets and sheets of papier-mache. A long, slow lap-dissolve revealed the skeleton (a real one, by the way); another lap-dissolve replaced the skeleton with a roughly-sculptured dummy, which suggested the contours of the actor; and a further series of such dissolves, each time using a slightly more finished dummy, brought us to the real actor, himself."

Something rarely accomplished in films that rely heavily on special effects, is achieved in THE INVISIBLE MAN. That is, that however spectacular and difficult they may be, the effects should neither overshadow nor inhibit the director. Instead, he must take them for granted, treat them like any other element of a scene and use them in a dramatic and cinematic fashion. Thus, Whale employs a surprising amount of cutting during scenes that involve special effects, and at times there is cutting during the effects themselves; this makes the sequences far more exciting than they would be if the director, intimidated by the problems, had simply let each effect be presented in a single long-shot. As animator David Allen has pointed out in these pages, spectacle alone "has no inherent emotional meaning," and, without that, the film will almost inevitably be a minor one. The special effects must exist for the film, not the reverse. The few pictures that have had the budget, technical talent, and directorial determination to make this the case include KING KONG, THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, THE BIRDS, 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY -- and THE INVISIBLE MAN. In the case of THE INVISIBLE MAN, this manner of approaching special effects is necessary to achieve the contrast between "magical" occurrences and ordinary settings and characters, a contrast that existed in the original novel and was eventually transferred to the screenplay.

But before setting about that task, Sherriff had to wade through a dozen earlier attempts at making a script of THE INVISIBLE MAN, with the studio expecting him to draw upon them for his own version. In fact, when he asked for a copy of the novel, as well, he was told that the studio's had been lost, but that everything worthwhile had gone

The personal confrontations between the Invisible Man and Kemp (BILLY) and Flora (BRIGHT) gives us insight into the deteriorating sanity of the character, as well as providing excellent examples of Whale's masterful integration of dialogue and picture.



into the scripts, "and a great deal more besides." After searching for the novel in "the few bookshops that existed in Hollywood," Sherriff finally found one in a stall at a market in the Chinese quarter. "It cost me fifteen cents, but was worth a gold mine. The smiling Chinese stallholder suggested that I might also like a pickled cabbage? Possibly a crayfish or a small pork pie? But I was more than satisfied."<sup>15</sup>

The large pile of scripts disturbed Sherriff. "The more I read, the more bewildered and discouraged I became. To my way of thinking the stuff was dreadful, and the reason wasn't far to seek. It had all been written by what were known in Hollywood as 'writers on the lot'...there on weekly salaries to do whatever they were given. Universal was working to capacity and turning out about forty pictures a year. It wasn't practical to employ a specific writer for each story, so they kept about a dozen on the weekly payroll, and when they got a difficult proposition like *THE INVISIBLE MAN* they would let a number of them have a go at it in turn, hoping that sooner or later one of them would produce a script worth using. If none of them hit the bull's-eye the studio would finally call in what they called a 'top writer' (in this case me) to sift out all the stuff and make one smashing super screenplay of it...."

"The man who had turned it (the first script) out no doubt had the original H.G. Wells book beside him, but to justify his employment he had to improve on it. If he had stuck to the original story and made a faithful adaptation the studio would probably have said he hadn't got any initiative or imagination of his own; that they weren't paying good money merely to copy out what Wells had written. So he had set aside the original story and given the invisible man adventures from his own imagination. The studio had no doubt felt there were good ideas in it but not enough, and passed it on to another writer. The second writer had got to go one better and invent a lot more new ideas. The third writer had to trump the one before, and so it went on, each new effort becoming more extravagant and fantastic and ridiculous. One writer took the scene in Tsarist Russia at the time of the Revolution and turned the hero into a sort of invisible *Scarlet Pimpernel*. Another made him into a man from Mars who threatened to flood the world with invisible Martians, and all of them envisaged him as a figure of indescribable peril to the world, threatening to use his unique invisibility to reform it or destroy it, as he felt inclined. One thing stood out clearly in every page I read. The charm and the humor and the fascination that had established the original Wells story as a classic had been utterly destroyed."<sup>16</sup>

A re-reading of the novel reinforced Sherriff's faith in Wells' approach. "His secret was a simple one. To give reality to a fantastic story, he knew that it had to be told through the eyes of ordinary, plain-spoken people. If you tried to fasten extraordinary events to extraordinary events, the whole thing fell to pieces, and the writers of that massive pile of screenplays had done. They had invented fabulous events and surrounded them with unreal characters."<sup>17</sup>

Analyzing the difference between film writing and writing a play or a novel, Sherriff concluded that it was especially important for the author to "prune away the side-shoots and keep to the main stem, and every line of dialogue was made to drive the story on." He found that line with *THE INVISIBLE MAN*, but Wells had paved the way for me. He never drifted away into anything that wasn't essential to the story, so it wasn't difficult to stick to the novel as he had written it. I dramatised it chapter by chapter, and it was mainly a matter of turning narrative into dialogue. I had to add ingredients here and there to tighten up the drama, and condense a lot to pack a novel of two hundred minutes (sic), a film designed to play for a hundred minutes (sic), but when it was finished I felt reasonably sure that this was the genuine, unadulterated story which Wells himself had conceived." However, at an average of one page per minute of screen time, the final script proved to be ten pages too long. Because "there wasn't a scene in it that hadn't

already been cut to the bone," Sherriff didn't want the story department setting to work on it with a hatchet. "The only thing was to start afresh and write the screenplay over again. It was an exhausting job, but good practice in dramatic economy, and I soon began to find lines of twenty words that could be spoken just as effectively in ten. I sweated over it for a week, working most of the nights, for time was running short. But it came out all right in the end."<sup>18</sup>

Although not as totally faithful as Sherriff recalls, the film is an excellent adaptation of the novel. Most importantly, it captures the tone of the original, its lightness combined with tension; it also retains the basic narrative structure, and the details of certain specific incidents. Both open with the Stranger's arrival at the Inn, develop his growing irritation at the locals' curiosity, and provide an initial climax when he strips off his clothes in front of them. (This section is, in fact, as faithful as any purist could possibly ask.) Then the Invisible Man, Jack Griffin, indulges in some impish and angry pranks in the village, and an alarm goes out about him. Griffin eventually plans a partnership with Dr. Kemp, who helps him in creating a "Reign of Terror." When Kemp betrays him by notifying the police, Griffin escapes and announces that he will execute Kemp as a lesson to all who would resist his power. Soon afterward, Griffin himself is killed, and at death he regains visibility.

In order to "keep to the main stem," no doubt, Sherriff wisely condensed the lengthy explanation that Griffin gives to Kemp in the middle of the story. Both authors utilize this opportunity to offer information about the Invisible Man's adventures, reactions, and plans, but Wells' character has a monologue that occupies virtually a quarter of the novel's length. In it, Griffin recounts the details of his preliminary experiments, first on a stray cat and later on himself. During that time, his need for money had prompted him callously to rob his own father, which resulted in the old man's suicide, as the money had not been his. Griffin then describes the problems he had in adjusting to invisibility. As well as his adventures in stealing clothes and other items from stores.

Most of these events have been dropped from the film, because their inclusion would have required a prolonged recitation by Griffin, a major series of flashbacks, or the beginning of the story "at the beginning"; the first choice would be dramatically and visually static, the second would interrupt the tale's pace and slow (which can be done more successfully on the printed page than on the screen), and the third would sacrifice the impact of opening with the Stranger's arrival at the Inn, and the element of the Unknown and the Mysterious that it conveys. Similarly, in the main portion of the story, Wells' use of an omniscient third-person narrator allows him to psych about in time and space, and to shift from the psychological point of view of the bewildered townspeople to that of the Invisible Man, an ability automatically denied to the filmmakers.

Partly to counteract this structurally necessary reduction of Griffin's explanation to Kemp, and no doubt partly to provide the love interest demanded by Hollywood producers (and audiences), Sherriff added two new characters: Dr. Cranley, with whom Griffin had been working, and his daughter Flora, Griffin's fiancée. Kemp's importance was then increased by making him an associate of Griffin and Cranley, and a rival for Flora's affection. Instead of a slight acquaintance who hardly remembers Griffin. This allows the Invisible Man's three friends, worried about his disappearance, to talk about him in scenes intercut with the main action -- and thus logically to provide exposition comparable to that removed from the other sequence.

The change also unifies the action by providing a set of characters who can be involved in most of the major events. In the book, Griffin runs into Kemp quite by accident, which is acceptable in a novel's broader spread of time and location, whereas the more confined circumference of a film encourages closer involvement among the characters. Further



LEFT: Director James Whale strikes a pose while filming THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN. RIGHT: Claude Rains is similarly pensive in Whale's THE INVISIBLE MAN.



tightening-up of the book involves eliminating Mr. Thomas Marvel, the tramp who is forced to help Griffin after the trouble at the Inn, and Sherriff gives Kemp two of the tramp's functions; accompanying Griffin to the Inn to recover the notebooks he had left behind there, and the seeking of police protection. The latter becomes part of Kemp's reaction to the Invisible Man's threat of execution. Sherriff also lets Griffin carry out his threat, whereas in the book he is killed while chasing Kemp, who survives. The film therefore builds to a more dramatic climax than does the book.

The origin of these added elements was probably FRANKENSTEIN, for the two films share the situation of a passionate young scientist who has disappeared in order to experiment alone, leaving behind a worried fiancée, an elderly relative and associate (Dr. Cranley here combines Dr. Waldman and Baron Frankenstein), and a friend who is interested in the girl. The inclusion of this material moves the film's structure closer to that of FRANKENSTEIN than of the Wells novel: both films start by introducing the menace situation, without explanation, and then shift to a scene "back home" that provides exposition. Even in the dialogue in that scene evokes FRANKENSTEIN, as Flora speaks of receiving a cryptic note from Griffin, who has been missing almost a month. As in FRANKENSTEIN, the existence of the "other man" is also established here. The plot then shifts back to the initial situation, and remains there until it reaches a climax wherein the menace is "erased" (or set loose), and then returns to the normal characters. After that, the two sets of characters converge, and in THE INVISIBLE MAN the whole process is repeated when the conversation of Griffin and Kemp is interrupted with the police inquiry at the Inn, after which the two lines join when Griffin and Kemp recover the notebooks under the noses of the police. On a much more specific level, the vignette in which an officer organizing a search assigns certain areas to different group leaders evokes the Burgomaster's similar scene toward the end of FRANKENSTEIN.

Perhaps conscious and perhaps not, this similarity could have resulted from Whale's contributions to story conferences with Sherriff, or even from Sherriff alone, who most likely screened FRANKENSTEIN in preparation for his work or could recall it from an earlier viewing. And pointing out this parallel is not necessarily meant as criticism, for the two results are different enough to be independent (just as, despite basic resemblances, DRACULA and THE MUMMY are quite individual works). There is also an intriguing difference in the way the two films use these elements: In FRANKENSTEIN, Elizabeth is set up with Victor

Moritz for later, after Henry Frankenstein is killed in his fall from the windmill, and that is how Whale intended the film to end, until he backed out and arbitrarily let Henry regain consciousness, leaving poor Victor out in the cold. It is tempting to think that Whale, in preparing THE INVISIBLE MAN, consciously decided to "atone" for his earlier capitulation by flaunting two standard requirements simultaneously. This time, he not only allows his hero to be killed off, but he also does away with the heroine's other suitor. As a result, the only major male character alive at the end is the girl's father!

Of course, all these events in THE INVISIBLE MAN are reasonably motivated in the script, and the ending's difference from that of FRANKENSTEIN develops logically from the changes made in Wells' plot. For example, by increasing Kemp's importance, Sherriff also provides Griffin-the-protagonist with an individual antagonist, thereby narrowing focus to a more specific conflict than exists in the novel -- and adds an element that is not part of the relationship between Henry Frankenstein and Victor Moritz. Such a conflict is dramatically necessary in THE INVISIBLE MAN because there is no overt struggle between the scientist and a monster, as there is in FRANKENSTEIN, here, the scientist is the monster, without even the contrasts found in The Jekyll-Hyde duality to strike sparks.

Because the conflict between Griffin and Kemp has gained in importance, it also must come to some definite resolution, and since the viewers have been encouraged to enjoy vicariously the Invisible Man's position and to relish his power, they would feel (and be) shortchanged without this preliminary victory before his inevitable and anticipated destruction. (Even so, a modern audience is justifiably and pleasantly surprised that Griffin is allowed to accomplish such a cold-blooded murder. The fantasy of omnipotence is thus allowed a brief extension.) Sherriff prepares us for Kemp's death, however, by building up his cowardice, a trait that inhibits audience identification and even arouses some antipathy; Victor Moritz was a gentle, good-looking man who suggested his affection to Elizabeth and then let the matter rest, whereas Kemp has a sour personality, and injudiciously presses his case too hard and at the wrong time. He is hardly an outright villain, but neither does he act like a gentleman in trying to take advantage of Griffin's absence, so we are impressed that he is killed, without being too disturbed at his loss.

Griffin's megalomania exists in both film and book, with the character deciding to institute a Reign of Terror, but in the novel he never has a



chance to get started, while in the film he at least gets in one good-sized train wreck. But anything that is gained must be paid for, and the film pays for allowing a train wreck by having to declare that a drug used by Griffin, "homocaine", has driven him insane. This reduces Griffin's moral accountability for his actions, and allows the viewer to avoid suffering vicarious guilt. The book's narrator does consider the possibility that Griffin has gone insane, but he rejects the theory, commenting instead on the "extraordinary irrationality" of this "intensely egotistical and unfeeling man." In this aspect the film indulges, but chooses not to emphasize, what is essentially a character oversimplification [as was the "criminal brain" device in FRANKENSTEIN].

Sherriff not only added the train "accident," but also went Wells one better by creating for Griffin two dynamic speeches about his plans for seizing Power that have no direct counterparts in the book. Because of their vividness and the weight given them by their placement, the megalomaniac side of THE INVISIBLE MAN's personality definitely gains in importance. The first such speech is delivered to Kemp: "Just a scientific experiment at first, that's all -- to do something no other man in the world had done. Kemp, I know now! It came to me suddenly. The things I took seemed to light up my brain. Suddenly I realized the power I held -- the power to rule, to make the world grovel at my feet. Ha, ha! We'll soon put the world right now, Kemp.... We'll begin with a Reign of Terror. A few murders, here and there. Murders of great men, murders of little men, just to show we make no distinction. We might even wreck a train or two. Just these fingers, 'round a signalman's throat."

In the development of horror films, Griffin is a pivotal character because he is one of the first scientists (outside of serials) who proclaims his superiority to the masses, who revels in it and sees no reason why he shouldn't rule the world. This Superman quality exists in Wells' novel, but it is heightened by Sherriff's dialogue and Rains' dynamic performance; significantly, the viewer is led to agree about Griffin's superiority, and since he is the central character, the "hero," we identify with him and enjoy feeling better than everyone else (without considering that all the other individuals in the audience are doing the same).

Of course, the attraction of Power was implicit in most of the horror films that preceded THE INVISIBLE MAN. Audiences relished the supernatural abilities of Dracula and Ichabod, the scientific brilliance of Henry Frankenstein and Henry Jekyll, and the physical strength of the Frankenstein Monster and Mr. Hyde; they also were fascinated by these characters' (usually voluntary) independence and isolation, by their ability to reject the earthy crowd and venture into the Forbidden and the Unknown. They all, however, have limited goals and few spend any time verbalizing a desire for power. Griffin, though, is a crystallization of this Superman aspect that would continue to be suggested in films like THE BLACK CAT, and which hit another peak in THE RAVEN'S Dr. Richard ("I am a law unto myself") Vollen. The Superman would naturally intrigue people who, boxed into a corner by the Depression, respected and eagerly fantasized about men who ignored the rules and took matters into their own hands, whether they be those of Jack Griffin, Little Caesar, or Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As one character in King Vidor's OUR DAILY BREAD (1934) says, regarding the selection of a leader for a collective farm, "We got a big job here, and we need a big boss!" whereupon the main character is appointed Boss by acclamation. This fascination faded out in the later thirties, as the Depression receded and as reports from Germany revealed some of the realistic results of putting this approach into full effect.

Even though Philip Wylie's 1931 THE MURDERER INVISIBLE has only the most general similarities to Universal's film and had little or no direct influence on it, that novel does deal with this Superman tendency by evolving into an allegory about it. Near the point of achieving world rule, the title character, Carpenter, declares: "Remember that I am

invulnerable and implacable. Remember that I am science and represent the highest ideals of mankind. I shall force virtue and progress upon this blind and stubborn world. In committing itself to me the world will realize retrospectively the colossal benefit of my dominion." In a public announcement, Carpenter promised that, if the government of the United States were placed in his hands, "bloodshed and terrorism will be at an end; the reforms which will inevitably follow will be civil and social; the monetary system will remain but capitalism will be abolished in its accepted sense; the collaboration of scientists and engineers will be invited to aid the work ahead; and its significant objective will be to leap in one generation the evolutionary processes of hundreds, perhaps thousands of years."

Carpenter had little difficulty explaining why he thought a benevolent despot was needed. "Mankind breeds better dogs than men. If there is damnation -- that is it. It is inexcusable -- asinine -- unbearable. Mankind digs up every lump of gold, every ton of coal, every ounce of oil he can find -- just to clog the roads with automobiles on Sunday afternoon. Can you tell me the name of one individual who is perfectly adjusted to his environment? I except sleeping maniacs in straight jackets. Tell me one. Tell me a person who is efficient, effective and happy. Every one -- scarred, flat-cheated, pimpled, sniveling with colds, flabby, hiding under his clothes the shameful and disorders of his body -- every one. There is no perfect physical specimen. Yet -- rigorously imposed law could change that in two generations.... I won't live forever. No. But I shall find some one to take my place and so perpetuate my autocracy until the world has been forced to take care of itself, forced to act according to fact instead of according to prejudice, taboos, man-made law, religious precept."

Some influential individuals supported Carpenter's plans, with comments like the following: "He has given us a sample of the power he can wield to force the stupid masses to his will. The sooner the intelligent minority brings pressure on the majority to submit to this unknown benefactor's directions, the sooner will mankind be lifted bodily from the slough of contemporary civilization." But explain the novel's third-person narrator, Carpenter forgot about "the ineradicable desire of the individual to live his life free of social, mental and moral interference, and the unchangeable law of nature which makes man's evolution a gradual process accomplished by education, by the slow alteration of outward circumstance, by infinitesimal degrees of upward growth.... He might have seen from history that no man, no idea, no invention had the intrinsic potency to accelerate by any fraction the ponderous and immutable evolution of the masses.... Iron did not lift the character of mankind -- or steel -- or steam -- or electricity -- or radio -- or medicine. One man could not do it even if he slew from the sanctuary of his invisibility until the last remnants of the combined races fled to the most remote wilderness. However, the calm logic of philosophy has invariably rusted in the acid of human ambition -- the lessons of time have been anesthetized in the heady vapors of megalomania. Carpenter believed he could do what no man had done before him."

These are some of the issues implied by the content and attitude of THE INVISIBLE MAN, though if that film had dealt with them in the explicit fashion of The Murderer Invisible it would have become ponderously didactic, and probably as narrow in vision as are most social comment films. It would also most likely have had its entertainment element reduced. But the content is still there, to be reacted to as each viewer sees fit.

While each individual watching the film would never tolerate someone else having the Total Power that Griffin desires, the fantasy of having it himself remains appealing. Thus, Griffin's assertion of God-like omnipotence by killing Kemp is really the emotional climax of the film, with the elimination of the Invisible Man merely a perfunctory necessity for returning the world to order. Even Whale seems to have lost interest at

this point, for the discovery of Griffin sleeping in a barn occurs abruptly, and the actual trapping of him is handled without the director's usual ability to pace a scene to elicit its full quota of tension.

Instead, his shots leading up to this "climax" are cut too short, and when events happen, they happen much too fast. It is almost as though Whale, discouraged at not being able to show Griffin's reaction, stops treating him like a human being with feelings. So, after the barn is set afire, all we get is a shot of the straw moving as Griffin wakes up, then one of the barn doors opening as he leaves. After that, his footprints appear in the snow, and then he is killed. Excitement and compassion are diminished by the limited number of shots used, with only a limited amount of dread established among the police, and no emotion at all created for Griffin. The climax of FRANKENSTEIN makes a good contrast here, because in that film Whale evokes tremendous terror and sympathy for the Monster trapped in the burning mill.

But this sequence is probably the only one in THE INVISIBLE MAN that fails to be well developed and discretely handled. Whale was one of the more intelligent directors then working in Hollywood, and this extends beyond just a comprehension of theme, motivation, and mood. In fact, his entire visual style involves careful judgment, without draining the scenes of life and leave them meticulous but sterile. Rather, it gives the scenes a subtle vitality that a more casual technique would never have achieved.

The design of THE INVISIBLE MAN is far less Gothic than that of FRANKENSTEIN, with its semi-legendary quality; THE INVISIBLE MAN looks more realistic and concretely contemporary, in keeping with Well's and Sherriff's desire to place the fantastic in an ordinary setting. But it does share a general visual approach with the rest of Whale's best work (FRANKENSTEIN, ONE MORE RIVER, such of BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN), and that is to keep his camera moving, sometimes via smooth tracking shots, often by cutting among a large number of slightly varied set-ups, usually with an admirably concise combination of the two techniques. It must be emphasized, though, that the style is used only where it will do the most good. Whale knows when to cut and when not to; when a few extra shots not called for by the dialogue can build tension; when a shifting of camera angle is needed to keep the viewer's eye satisfied during an expository speech; when a stationary medium shot is the best choice for a dramatically significant speech, whereupon a climactic cut to a closeup will increase the impact of a final revelation even more.

All of this may sound basic, and it is, but it is not commonly encountered in the way and to the extent that Whale uses it. To realize the planning and determination that must have been required, consider the fact that Whale seldom returns us to the exact shot which he cut away from a few seconds earlier. Instead, he uses a new set-up, perhaps a little closer to the subject or from a slightly different angle. At times, one would hardly realize that the positioning of shots is different without a careful study of the film, and yet the effect of fluidity is achieved without the viewer being conscious of it. One feels that there is something special about the visual style of Whale's films even when there is no opportunity to pin-point it exactly.

This relatively unique editing of camera positions is more likely to be detected when Whale cuts directly from one angle to a slightly closer one of the same subject. Yet here it is also difficult to notice, because the shots are so similar (they verge dangerously close to being jump-cuts) that the eye does not react consciously to the change; the effect is less visual than it is psychological, with the viewer "getting closer" to the character, or "leaning forward", as what is being said becomes more interesting or dramatic. A minor example occurs when the Stranger requests a room, and Mr. Hall turns and calls for his wife.

The Camera pans to the right and stops at a door, which suddenly opens as Mrs. Hall sticks her head in, replies, enters the room, and walks over to the men. Normally, this would be handled in one take, but as soon as he gets to the door, Whale cuts to a slightly closer view of it, just as it opens and Mrs. Hall appears. The shots are very similar, the wood of the door is so unobtrusive that it is hard to notice its change in size, and the audience is distracted from the cut by the opening of the door a fraction of a second later -- all of which makes the cut virtually invisible, even to someone looking for it, much less to a viewer engrossed in the action. What, then, is gained by it? The fact that Mrs. Hall's face is slightly larger than expected is a visceral, almost subliminal, shock that reinforces the suddenness of the door opening and her reply, and in general helps to keep the audience a little off balance, which is necessary for the kind of scene -- and movie -- that is being made. Alone, the effect is minimal, but as part of a total, unified style it is cumulatively exciting.

A larger example is the scene which climaxes the introductory section at the Inn, when Mrs. Hall brings the sustard forgotten on her previous trip to the Stranger's room, enters abruptly, and surprises him while eating. There is a medium shot of the door as it opens and she enters; cut to a close-up of Mrs. Hall for her look of surprise; cut to a medium shot facing the Man, who is sitting at the table, holding a napkin in front of his face; cut to her close-up again; cut to a slightly different angle of the Man (obviously a different take, because of the way he is holding the napkin); cut to a shot of him, framed on the left by the doorway and on the right by Mrs. Hall; cut to the preceding shot of him holding the napkin, as he nods



James Whale pays great attention to proper lighting as he prepares to direct a scene.

to put the jar down; cut to a medium long shot with her by the door on the left and him on the right, and as she cautiously moves closer the camera tracks to the left and forward, eliminating space as they get closer together, until she puts the jar down; cut to a medium close shot of Mrs. Hall picking up his overcoat, with part of his face still visible in the right foreground; cut to the preceding shot, this time panning with Mrs. Hall as she moves to the door and leaves; cut to a medium close shot of Griffin from the side as he lowers his napkin. Whale, here, provides a series of shots that keeps us from "settling" comfortably on any single view of the Man.

The introductory scene between Kemp and Flora reveals how this fluid cutting is blended with dialogue.

Long shot that ends with the two standing at the opposite side of the room, by a window and separated by a vase of flowers ("Flora"). No dialogue.

Medium shot of Kemp (3/4 back to us) and Flora (back to us). When she speaks, Flora turns to face Kemp.

Kemp: I'll get the car outside. It'll give you a rest to come for a run.  
Flora: You think there are any papers in his room to help us? Surely he must have arranged where he was going. There may be letters.

Kemp: He left a heap of burnt papers in his fireplace, that's all.'

Medium shot of the two from Kemp's side of flowers, this time facing Flora to emphasize her lines.

Flora: He was so strange those last few days before he went--so excited and strung up. And yet he wouldn't say a word to explain it.

Tight close-up on Flora, with the flowers still in the foreground, out of focus;

#### THE STAR



#### THE DIRECTOR

the shots have gotten closer, as he comments became more intense and personal.

Flora (without a break): I'd never seen him like it before. He was always so keen to tell me about his experiments.

Medium shot of her side of the flowers only. Flora turns and sits. Kemp enters the frame from the left, standing behind her and speaks. They are now both facing camera. The shot is held during this important dialogue unit.

Kemp: He meddled in things men should leave alone.

Flora: What do you mean?

Kemp: Your father's a scientist, Flora, he's discovered more about preserving food than any man living and Jack and I were employed to help him. That's a plain, straight forward job. It's not romantic, but it saves hundreds of deaths and thousands of stomach aches.

Flora: What did you mean about things men should leave alone?

Kemp: He worked in secret. He kept a lot of stuff locked in a big cupboard in his laboratory. He never opened that cupboard until he'd bar the door and draw the blinds. Straightforward scientists have no need for barred doors and drawn blinds.

At this point Kemp starts to sit down beside her, very close.

Close shot of the two, from the same angle, a shot appropriate to the "closeness" of what is being said.

Kemp (unbroken): He cares nothing for you, Flora. He'll never care about anything but test tubes and chemicals. How can he go away like this, without a word?

Flora, dear -- please darling, let me tell you how I feel? I can't work or sleep until I --

Flora: Oh, leave me alone! How can you? At this point, she starts to fall forward out of frame, hands to her face, in tears.

Close shot of her, from slightly further back and to the side. She cries. Pan up to Kesp, as he rises, ending in a medium close shot of him across the tops of the flowers. Pause. Then the camera pulls away, back across the room, with the characters silent.

Another scene that offers a good illustration of Whale's combination of pictures and dialogue is a conversation between Griffin and Flora at Kesp's house. Here, the two are sitting by a window, so for the most part there is no physical movement at all, yet the scene is certainly not static.

Medium shot (cut off at mid-calf) of the two sitting, bodies facing us but turned to look at each other.

Griffin: How beautiful you look. That funny little hat. I always liked it. You've been crying!

Close up of Flora.

Flora: I want to help you. Why did you do this?

Griffin: For you, Flora!

Flora: For me?

New Medium shot of the two, from an angle now slightly behind Griffin, thus giving Flora slightly more emphasis.

Griffin: Yes, for you, my darling. I wanted to do something tremendous --

Close up of Griffin.

Griffin (unbroken): To achieve what men of science have dreamt of since the world began -- to gain wealth and fame and honor -- to write my name above the greatest scientists of all time. I was so pitifully poor. I had nothing to offer you, Flora. I was just a poor, struggling chemist.

Medium close shot (cut off at belt) of the

two.

Griffin (unbroken): I shall come back to you, Flora, very soon now. The secret of invisibility lies there, in my books. I shall work in Kesp's laboratory until I find a way back. There is a way back, Flora, and then I shall come to you. I shall offer my secret to the world -- with all its terrible power. The nations of the world will bid for it, thousands, millions. The nation that wins my secret can sweep the world with invisible armies!

Flora: Jack, I want you to let my father help you. You know how clever he is. He'll work with you day and night, until you find that second secret, the one that will bring you back to us.

Closer shot of Flora alone.

Flora (unbroken): Then we'll have those lovely, peaceful days again, out under the tree, after your work in the evening.

Closer shot of Griffin alone (cut off at breast-pocket level).

Griffin: Your father? Clever? Haha! You think he can help me? He's got the brain of a tapeworm, a maggot -- beside mine. Don't you see what it means? Power -- power to rule, to make the world grovel at my feet!

Close up of Flora.

Flora: Jack, listen to me, listen. My father found a note in your room. He knows something about monomane even you don't know.

Medium close shot of the two (cut off at a bit below breast-pocket level)..

Flora (unbroken): It alters you, changes you. Makes you feel -- differently. Probably the power of it will go if you know what you're fighting.

Close up of Flora again.

Flora (unbroken): Oh, come and stay with us. Let's fight this thing out together.

LEFT: Police and villagers watch as the footprints of the Invisible Man leave the burning barn. RIGHT: Fatally wounded, Griffin falls, leaving an imprint of his form in the snow.





Medium close shot of Griffin alone (cut off a bit below breast-pocket level). During the speech, he rises with camera tilting up at him.

Griffin: Power, I said! Power to walk into the gold vaults of the nations, --

Close up of Griffin.

Griffin (unbroken): into the secrets of Kings, even the Holy of Holies. Power to make multitudes run screaming in terror--

Back to medium close shot of Griffin.

Griffin (unbroken): at the touch of my little invisible finger. Even the moon's frightened of me! Frightened to death! The whole world's frightened to death!

Medium long shot of the two, farther back than the one that opened the sequence.

Whale handles the confrontation between Griffin and the police at the Inn in quite a different manner. Here, he resists allowing the opposing forces to appear in the same shot, so the scene alternates between facing shots of the police and townspeople (shot A) and the still-banded Invisible Man (shot B) in the following pattern: A/B/A/B/A/B/A. Finally, Griffin gets mad and in an appropriately closer shot shouts, "Stop where you are!" as he rises and the camera tilts upward, looking at him from a lower angle. This is followed by a more distant shot of the townspeople advancing, then a close-up of Griffin, as he says, "All right, you fools. You've brought it on yourselves. Everything would have come out right if you'd only left me alone. You've driven me near madness with your peering through the keyholes and gaping through the curtains. And now--" At this point, there is a shot of the townspeople listening, while Griffin says, "... you'll suffer for it. Back to an extreme close-up of Griffin: "You're crazy to know who I am, aren't you? All right--" Cut to the listeners, as he says "I'll show you!" Cut back to the extreme close-up, this time of the dummy head, as a hand pulls off the nose and the voice says, "There's a--" Cut to a slightly more distant shot of the townspeople watching where he throws his nose, as he says, "... souvenir for you." close up of the nose on the floor. Back to the close-up of the dummy, as the glasses are removed: "... and one for you." Reaction shot of the people. The dummy then starts to unwrap its head: "I'll show you who I am and what I am." Cut to a long shot, past Griffin's back as the bandages are being unwound, with the townspeople in the background watching. Close up of policeman, saying, "Look, he's all eaten away!" Medium shot of Griffin from the front, without a head, as he throws the bandage. Shot of the group ducking, and then running for the door. Shot of the staircase from directly above, as they run down it. Back to the medium shot of Griffin, who laughs without a head. In this sequence, Whale chooses his shots logically to convey the feeling of "confrontation," he cuts closer to emphasize certain of Griffin's lines and cuts away to show those referred to by other lines; all of these things relate directly to the content and logic of the scene, and yet they also create a cutting pattern that leads smoothly into the replacement of Rains' head with the dummy one. The only way that the substitution might be noticed is if the viewer is aware that this time, as he talks, Griffin's jaw is not moving.

In contrast to these examples, Whale makes good use of non-editing when Mrs. Hall first shows the Stranger to his room. He is aloof, standing in the background facing away from her and us; she patters around, too curious to leave, hoping she will learn something. In a long shot, Mrs. Hall is on the right in the foreground straightening something, moves to the left to putter with a lamp, then back to the right as she brushes a chair, then again to the left after Griffin tells her to bring some food. Throughout the shot, the camera has panned back and forth following her, but always with the Stranger remaining in the frame, as the central point to which she is connected, as though by a rubber band or a strong magnetic force. Here, the lack of cutting is what creates the humorous point of the scene.

There is, in fact, a large proportion of humor in THE INVISIBLE MAN, as there is in many of Whale's works, including his horror films. Wells' novel, too, has a witty tone, so here -- unlike in THE OLD DARK HOUSE -- it is consistent with the source. But THE INVISIBLE MAN is far from the same kind of film as THE OLD DARK HOUSE, because it veers closer to farce than to the sophisticated comedy of manners of the earlier film. This is inevitable, due to the nature of the material. Most slapstick comedy derives from some sort of physical violence related to mocking, taunting, or otherwise deflating objects of respect, and the humor in THE INVISIBLE MAN lies in Griffin's anti-Establishment ability to tweak noses with impunity, and in the foolishly bewildered or frightened reactions of ordinary people. This is emphasized by the many comic character-types cast as townspeople. Griffin's actions are often of this sort: He hits one man with a broom, knocks over a baby carriage, grabs an old man's hat and tosses it into a river, throws rocks through a store window, splatters ink on one policeman, and pulls the pants off another. At one point, when the crowd is chasing him around a room, Griffin's shirt drops to the ground just as a cop swings his club -- and hits another pursuer over the head. All of these events succeed as comedy by suggesting Griffin's impishness and the feeling that no one is really being hurt.

This farce is generally kept separate from the more serious scenes because it derives mainly from Griffin's total invisibility, while the intense scenes are those in which he can be seen, albeit wrapped in bandages. Rarely does Whale attempt to mix the two. At the end of the second invisible rampage, just after one bobbie is seen absurdly waving his club at nothing, Griffin strangles an official until he lies unconscious on the floor. Then he picks up a wooden stool and hits him on the head with it. Here, Whale shifts gears effectively by moving from painless farce to brutal murder. An earlier shift in the other direction is less acceptable: After a tense confrontation between Griffin and Mr. Hall, the landlord is thrown down a flight of stairs. The mood of the scene is then damaged by the excessive screeching of Una O'Connor (Mrs. Hall). Whale evidently realized how irritating this was and yet decided to use it, because he has the half-conscious Mr. Hall raise his head and in a weak voice tell her to shut up. This kind of humor is out of keeping with the aim of the sequence, and is a slight indulgence on Whale's part.

There is a subtler humor in some of the dialogue, such as policeman E.H. Clave's line, "He's invisible, that's what's the matter with him," and before that in his skeptical pompous, "What's all this?" (as in BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN when he, as the Burgomaster, keeps repeating, "Monster indeed!"). It may just be coincidence, but as the Invisible Man removes his clothes to

surprise the police, he says, "This will give them a bit of a shock," just when he is unzipping his trousers. Walking along a street with Kemp, the invisible Griffin has to remind his frightened associate, "Don't stare at me, you fool. Look in front of you!" Griffin also reveals some of the arch, haughty manner associated with the coy madness of Ernest Thesiger, as he declares his intention of murdering people of different social classes, "just to show we make no distinction."

The humor of THE INVISIBLE MAN was noticed and generally looked on with favor by the critics, in contrast to their uncertainty about how to respond to THE OLD DARK HOUSE. Variety provides a valuable look at the reactions of a 1933 audience. Apparently most of the scenes involving moving objects provoked laughter; "a majority of the rib-tickling... came when the invisible one removes his bandages and clothes, leaving nothing but space. Another funny one was to see him take off the bandages of what is the head, leaving only the pajamas visible and going to bed that way. First reel evokes considerable comedy, also, in sequences at a small country inn... The innkeeper and his wife, Forrester Harvey and Una O'Connor respectively, are swell comedy types and make the most of the opportunity. Miss O'Connor relays a lot on a very shrill scream." Even Variety's critic said he was not quite sure whether some of the laughs has been intended by the film-makers. This ambiguity is illustrated by the fact that Richard Watts, Jr. in his review described the scene of Griffin unwrapping his head, which evidently aroused public laughing, as "properly frightening." He also felt that the comedy bits were "presented with less blatancy than might have been expected, even though they do threaten to make the invisible maniac perhaps less terrifying on occasion than the plot demands."<sup>19</sup> These contrasting attitudes are possible, because the scene (and concept) contains both humor and horror, comedy and tragedy.

At a time when reviewers were starting to develop a condescending approach to the horror genre, THE INVISIBLE MAN inspired a rare respect, caused no doubt partly by the film's quality and partly by its literary origin. Mordaunt Hall, in the time, called it one of the best features of its kind... It is in many ways a far better picture than was FRANKENSTEIN. It has enough thrills to satisfy anybody and they are worked out with a genuine dramatic value.<sup>20</sup> Variety explained the situation fairly well: "Universal, which has shown a liking for screamers, and had the nerve to put the first one over, is delivering something here which will more than satisfy audiences. Chillies were sometime ago presumed to have spent themselves as box office. That may be true and therefore require urgent campaigning, but so far as entertainment value is concerned, INVISIBLE MAN will take care of itself."<sup>21</sup>

Even the more intellectual magazines praised the film. Said William Troy, in The Nation: "There are two very good reasons why the version of H.G. Wells' INVISIBLE MAN at the old Roxy is so much better than this sort of thing usually out to be on the screen. The first is that James Whale, who is responsible for the direction, has taken a great deal of pains with something that is usually either reduced to a minimum or altogether ignored in these attempts to dramatize the more far-fetched hypotheses of science -- namely, setting.... Of Claud Rains' richly suggestive voice it is not too much to say that it is hardly less responsible than the direction for the peculiar quality of the picture as a whole. The preternatural compound of Olymian merriment and human desolation which are its overtones lends a seriousness that would otherwise be lacking. But taken either as a technical exercise or as a sometimes profoundly moving retelling of the Frankenstein fable, THE INVISIBLE MAN is one of the most rewarding of the recent films."<sup>22</sup>

Wells himself said, at a dinner given to publicize the film, that it was the only one of his stories that he had liked on the screen. However, he added "in his clipped and slightly high pitched tones.... that while he liked the

picture he had one grave fault to find with it. It had taken his brilliant scientist and changed him into a lunatic, a liberty he could not condone." Whale, perhaps rationalizing a bit, replied "that the rationally minded motion-picture audience had to be considered first. After all, Mr. Whale remarked, 'in the minds of rational people only a lunatic would want to make himself invisible, anyway.'"

THE INVISIBLE MAN is overall a horror film, but because science is emphasized as a cause it overlaps into the science-fiction genre, and the invisible scenes fall readily into a comic-fantasy category. This multi-effect quality makes the film one of a kind, and probably contributed to its popular success. By the end of 1932, the horror fad was past its peak in terms of audience attendance. FRANKENSTEIN and DR. Jekyll AND MR. HYDE had been the high-points of popularity, after which audiences had been disappointed in the more subtle, less attentional OLD DARK HOUSE and MUMMY. By the start of 1933, 42ND STREET had initiated a new fad for musicals, and while horror films continued to be made and attended, they appealed no more strongly than other features. Only an occasional fantasy-variety caught the public's interest as unrepeatable, one-shot hits; specifically, KING KONG was a total blockbuster in 1933, and THE INVISIBLE MAN was a healthy competitor.

At the Roxy in New York, THE INVISIBLE MAN took in \$42,000 for its first week (an contrast to \$19,000 for the prior week's THE MAD GAME, \$25,000

BELOW: Una O'Connor brings the Invisible Man his mustard, at a most inopportune moment. BOTTOM: The sleeping form of the Invisible Man is discovered as he seeks refuge in an old barn.



for the second, and \$10,500 for an additional five days. This was the first time in 77 weeks that the Roxy had held a picture for a second week; the film broke the theatre's attendance records for the previous two years, and it was estimated that as many as 128,000 had seen it after little more than one week.

THE INVISIBLE MAN'S quality and success reinforced the reputations of Whale and Sherriff, and established Claude Rains in Hollywood. Still a rewarding experience, it offers knockabout farce, whimsical charm, adventure fantasy, and brutal violence; it depicts human aspiration, human arrogance, human accomplishments, and human absurd-

ities; it arouses emotions of omnipotence, helplessness, objective laughter, and subjective sympathy; it inspires awe at technical ability, while making us forget that what we are seeing is impossible. Most of all, amid the comedy and the spectacle, the fantasy and the illusion, it never forgets the tragic solitude of a man who has managed to go beyond the normal, and is trapped there, isolated, unable ever to return -- he has achieved his goal but lost everything in the process, and it is this more than anything else which reveals James Whale and R.C. Sherriff as artists, and keeps THE INVISIBLE MAN a classic.

(continued on page 22)



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# the MAKING of FREAKS

**The events leading up to the creation of Browning's classic. by Eli Savada**

"All that is necessary now, on top of our other trials and tribulations, is to start frightening our child patrons to the point of hysteria."

*Comment by M.A. Lightman, president of the Motion Picture Theater Owners, after the release of DRACULA and FRANKENSTEIN, warning of the possible consequences if Hollywood were to flood the film-going public with "horror" pictures [Late December, 1931].*

In the summer of 1931, Irving Thalberg, young production manager at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, had been eyeing, as had many other executives throughout the film industry, the phenomenal box-office success of Universal's trend-setting vampire film, DRACULA. Thalberg, sensing a growing "horror cycle" in the cinema, wanted to outdo the rival studios with a "shocker" that would allow M-G-M to become a forerunner in the sound rebirth of that genre on the screen. He asked scriptwriter Willis Goldbeck to come up with an awe-inspiring story more horrible than all the rest. Working with Leon Gordon, Goldbeck soon developed a script that dealt with the extraordinary relationships among the deformed creatures that composed the majority of circus sideshows. Thalberg called Goldbeck into his office after having read the script, with the latter remarking that Thalberg "received me with his head down on his arms on the desk, as though overcome. He looked at me sadly, shook his head and sighed: 'Well, it's horrible.'"

The script was that of FREAKS, the basic story of which was suggested from fantasy writer Clarence Aaron "Tod" Robbins' short story, "Spurs," first published in the February, 1923 issue of Wunder's Magazine. Part of the script was also based upon material gathered by Tod Browning, the film's director, during his recent European trip. Browning had known of the story for years through his friend Harry Earls, the German midget who had given a memorable performance as the baby-faced pilferer in the director's exceptional thriller, THE UNHOLY THREE (1925), based on a "Tod" Robbins' novel. Cedric Gibbons, chief of the M-G-M Art Department, who as a childhood friend of the author had typed up his manuscripts, also was among those who brought the story to the attention of the studio. Gibbons was responsible for the purchase of "Spurs" by Metro for the amount of \$8,000.

The basic plot structure of FREAKS followed rather conventional lines: the husband finds his wife trying to kill him so she can steal his money and run off with her lover. To this simple melodramatic situation a most unusual background of the circus freakshow, with its strange abundance of curious tarantids, was added. The result was a complete distortion of the original idea, creating new depth to this old story.

Set against the backdrop of a traveling French circus, Cleopatra (Olga Baclanova), golden-haired high-wired beauty, scoffingly flirts with Hans (Harry Earls), a circus midget who is overwhelmed by the charms of the magnificent "big woman." When she discovers that her Lilliputian admirer has fallen heir to a fortune, she and her lover, Hercules (Henry Victor), a Cuban strong man, devise a plan by which Cleopatra will marry Hans, slowly poison him, and inherit his money. The other freaks, who catch on to the pair's evil scheming, band together to enact a horrible revenge upon them, forcing the film's powerful denouement.

In order to give FREAKS the proper directorial care, Thalberg decided upon the only logical choice: Tod Browning. Browning had just finished a three-picture contract for Universal; included was the smash hit DRACULA. Of all the directors in Hollywood, he was one of the few who could stomach such an unusual assignment. From Thalberg's point of view, he had confided in the director six years earlier on THE UNHOLY THREE, which had been hailed from coast-to-coast as one of the most exciting melodramas ever filmed. Add to this the box-office gold that had filled the M-G-M treasury during the blossoming of the Lon Chaney-Tod Browning alliance, which had these two evangelists of the macabre reeling off success after success, and Thalberg felt he would be at least as prosperous with only half of that combination (Chaney having died in 1930).

As far as Browning was concerned, he had for some time wanted to direct a picture that would dig into the private lives of the freaks around the sideshow. He himself had worked with many of these people, who were not at all repugnant to him, during the days when he toured with the circus and the carnival. He had run away from his home in Louisville, Kentucky at the ripe age of sixteen years to the lure of the sawdust where, under the canvas of the big top, he made his mark as a clown, acrobat, ringsmaster and contortionist. In fact, as part of a carnival troupe, the talented Browning did almost everything from driving stakes to playing the role of "Hosco, the Snake Eater."

Even before this circus-bound jackanapes left

home, he had the showman's blood running through his veins. When he was a lad (he was born on July 12, 1880), he would charge five pins admission for his playfellows to see shows he gave in the old shed in his back yard at 1433 Jefferson Street. And when he upped his price to the outrageous sum of a penny per show, his young customers still flocked to watch this young Barnum display his dramatic talents before their fascinated eyes.

Browning constantly paid tribute to his colorful past in such films as *THE SHOW* and *THE UNKNOWN*, two of his 1927 credits. In the former, the prodigal offered juicy glimpses of the pleasures in the Congress of Freaks and Marvels of the World, which included the Spider Woman, the Mermaid, the beheading of John the Baptist (which was the main attraction) and many other delightful items of carnival showmanship. *THE UNKNOWN* also evinced Browning's preoccupation with sideshow freaks, and the manner in which he built suspense through his knowledge of the life under the circus tent provided his with a notable cinematic coup de force.

Invariably, when Browning directed Lon Chaney, he allowed this versatile "man of a thousand faces" to appear in a stunning array of demented characterizations. Among some of those fearful portrayals were: a disappointed Bishop in *THE BLACKBIRD* (1926); a one-eyed derelict dive-owner in *THE ROAD TO MANDALAY* (1926); an "Armless Wonder" of a Spanish circus in *THE UNKNOWN*; and a vengeful cripple in *WEST OF ZANZIBAR* (1928). While the public "oohed" and "aahed" at each new "face" that Browning gave Chaney, it was, nonetheless, a normal human-being who acted the freak. Yet, is it no wonder that with such a peculiar exhibition of characters and films, most of which originated from Browning's pen, that he was destined to direct real freaks in *FREAKS*?

During the initial stages of preparation before actual filming began, Merrill Pye was assigned to draw up sketches of the various sets that the script demanded; Edgar Allen Woolf and Al Roasberg were called upon to add additional dialogue and comic relief to the script; Merrill Gerstad, who had worked as cinematographer on three previous Browning efforts, was preparing his crew; while Browning, aside from helping Thalberg oversee the whole assemblage, was casting the freaks who would eventually appear in the film. Harry Earles and his sister, Daisy, were among the first to be chosen since they knew the director personally and were perfect choices for the roles of the fitful midget and his neglected fiancée. The others had to be picked from among thousands of photographs that cluttered the desk in Browning's office.

One of those selected was Schlitz, the Pin-Head, who was a most unusual character. In a conquest of personality, it was claimed that she was a woman, since she dressed like one, but it was also rumored that she was a man. Furthermore, it was said that Schlitz was neither one nor the other. This conflict of identity did not seem to affect her zeal to work in pictures, especially *FREAKS*, for on any day that she was not scheduled for filming she would make such a fuss at the hotel that they would have to bring her over to the set and let her sit there. She could very well afford this sort of behavior because, being very well managed, she had amassed a sizeable wealth in diamond rings and apartment houses.

Daisy and Violet Hilton, the Siamese Twins, had previously been a hit with a "big-time" vaudeville act, as well as forming their own jazz band. They gave credit to Harry Houdini, the great magician and escape artist, for allowing them to adjust to life and become such a success. Houdini had told them: "Character will accomplish anything for you. You must learn to forget your physical and develop mental independence and you'll get anything you want."

Koo-Koo, the Bird-Girl, whose real name was Minnie Woolsey, was among the more grotesque-looking of the freaks, yet she was never bothered by her appearance because she was blind. She first entered show business as a sideshow attraction billed as "The Blind Girl from Mars," and was fifty-two years old when she appeared in *FREAKS*. As she sat amid the bustle on the set, in silence, a smile of contentment was often seen on her mouth.

The most tragic of all these eccentricities was Johnny Eck, the Half-Boy, who simply stopped at the waist-line. Depressingly handicapped, Johnny tried to forget his misfortune by studying art, music and



TOP: The real stars of the film enjoy a brief moment of idyllic peace. MIDDLE: Greta Garbo as the scheming Cleopatra teases Harry Earles (Nance). BOTTOM: Matt Mahugh converses with Prince Randian as the latter lights up a cigarette.



philosophy. He hoped one day to study law and to become an orchestra leader. He could not wipe from his mind, however hard he tried, the fact that he would never be physically capable of fulfilling those basic needs with which his fellow-man had been endowed: Love, marriage, children, and the right to walk.

Other members of the pitiful parade that would soon attempt to march notoriously into the local movie theatres included: Prince Kandian, the living torso, who, with neither arms nor legs, managed to roll his own cigarettes and shave himself through acrobatic undulations of his body; Peter Robinson, who was full-grown yet tipped the scales at a scant fifty-six pounds; Frances O'Conner, a pretty, armless blond from Sheridan, Wyoming; Martha Morris, another armless girl, but with legs only eight inches in length; Elizabeth Green, the human stork, and a host of other incredibly misshapen beings.

Regarding those pertinent "normal" members of the cast, there were some interesting changes made just before filming began. Myrna Loy was originally to have played the "menace" role which was finally delineated by Olga Baclanova; Jean Harlow, the platinum blonde on loan from Howard Hughes, was announced as the ingenue lead because she could wear tights well. That part was later relegated to Leila Hyams, who had appeared in Browning's first talking picture, *THE THIRTEENTH CHAIR*, in 1929. Henry Victor and Wallace Ford rounded out the remainder of this segment of the film's company, with the latter playing the romantic lead of "Phroso" the clown, opposite Miss Hyams.

By late October, 1931, carloads of freaks were beginning to arrive at M-G-M studio, much to the consternation of the personnel there, most of whom did not expect such a materialization of "talent." While the newcomers were getting acquainted with their new surroundings, popping in and out of alleyways, the weak-hearted secretaries went scurrying about in the opposite direction. During those first days of the freaks' immigration, opposition to the production grew to alarming proportions. Louis B. Mayer, executive president, who had somehow allowed this enterprise to slip through his fingers, was now furiously against allowing the project to continue. Many of his executives, spurred on by producer Harry Sapf, were trying to organize a petition calling on Thalberg to halt the ugly venture. Their argument concerned the Metro commissary, where they believed it would become unbearable to dine with Prince Kandian or Zap the Pin-Head.

Thalberg, having complete faith in his strange



LEFT: Cleopatra, the high-wire siren, pours a teaspoon of poison for her midget husband. TOP: The doctor informs Cleopatra that her husband has been poisoned. ABOVE: Hercules (Henry Victor) and Cleopatra heckle her new groom, Nana.

little undertaking, stood fast against the barrage of criticism, and continued his ardent support for the film. Within a few days, word came from the higher-ups that the freaks, with the exceptions of Harry and Daisy Earles and the Hilton Twins, were banned from the commissary. In order to accommodate them a private room, especially fitted for them to dine in, was constructed just off the set. Metro also had the cast quartered in a hotel in Culver City, where they were shipped every night as soon as work was over.

As filming began on November 9, 1931, the production quickly took on a mysterious "undercover" appearance; the studio was taking every possible precaution to keep the making of the picture a secret. For the most part, the freaks never came into contact with those people not directly connected with the film. Therefore, the number of people who were repulsed by their features was at a minimum. FREAKS' film editor Basil Wrangell wished he was never assigned to this particular production, however, as he commented: "It was bad enough to see them during the day when you'd go down on the set or have to go by their eating quarters, but when you had to look at it on the moviola for eighteen hours a day, it was enough to make you crawl up the walls."

FREAKS proceeded with relative smoothness through its nine weeks of shooting. Original shooting actually ended a week or so before New Year's Day of 1932, with the cast and crew working around the clock on the climax scenes of the storm sequence. Editor Wrangell, meanwhile, had been toiling through the "wedding feast" segment, which took up most of his time. He related: "God, that took 15,000 hours to put together. 'Cause nothing was in sync. That

was just a wild track they shot. The whole banquet. And we had to lip-synch all these creatures singing... We had the whole table and he (Browning) shot groups all the way around the table. Then each one of these had to be put into sync with this already pre-recorded track."

When the picture arrived at its preview theatre, which was probably in Huntington Park, Inglewood, or San Diego, it was the first week of January. The film's length was said to be 90 minutes (as compared to the 61 minutes that exist today), and just as quickly as the patrons ran out of the theatre, producer Thalberg rushed back to the studio with orders to add on a "happy ending" epilogue in which Hans, several years later, is seen living in solitude, except for his butler and servants, on the estate that he has inherited. Freida, Hans' former betrothed, returns with Phroso and his sweetheart, Venus. Freida comforts Hans' embittered soul as he breaks into tears, consoling him with a final romantic embrace. This sentimental after-thought has since been cut, sometime after it appeared in New York.

Armed with a vapor-blade, Thalberg did some careful re-editing during the last weeks of January, 1932. The most gruesome episode that he clipped from the preview print was the final decline of Hercules, for while it is all too obvious what happened to his lover, Cleopatra, who appeared on the screen as the shocking "chicken-woman," the viewer of the release version could only assume that when he saw Hercules squirming in the mud with a knife in his back, he died. The deleted shots showed a passing implication that the Herculean tower of strength was deprived of his manhood by those same freaks he thought to be without feelings. With the story's return to the dime museum, Hercules is found singing in a tenor falsetto, perhaps some love song to his mutilated Cleo. Some interiors and all exteriors of the dime museum, known as "Tetrallin's Freaks and Music Hall," which was of the English second-story variety, have been cut, too.

In all of the prints that exist today, the M-G-M titles (which mentioned the film's approval by the National Board of Review) have been replaced by a printed roller prologue ("Before proceeding with the following HIGHLY UNUSUAL ATTRACTION, a few words should be said about the amazing subject matter..."), which was added to the post World War II-Dwain Esper release.

On Wednesday, February 10, 1932, the truncated "revised version" of FREAKS, half-heartedly lauded by M-G-M as a bold and novel concept in film-making, premiered at the Fox Criterion in Los Angeles. While the feature was aimed at a bull's eye at the great god Box-Office, the result was a distinct failure.

In two weeks, FREAKS died in Los Angeles, as it would in Chicago and New York during the months that followed, leaving a trail of wreckage in its wake.

Yet, strangely enough, the film quickly built up its own unique reputation, surprisingly grossing five times the normal at Cincinnati's UFA-Itat. At Minneapolis' State Theatre it sent the take of that house a thousand dollars above average, even with a barrier against children. In Buffalo, while the Mills Brothers packed the Buffalo Theatre, the draw of FREAKS was the talk of the town, as it grossed twice the average of the Court Street Theatre during its brief four-day stay. This phenomenon also appeared in such cities as Boston, Cleveland, Houston, St. Paul, and Omaha.

These minor box-office victories were unfortunately unable to offset the film's sinking receipts in the rest of the country. In Kansas City, FREAKS sent the Midland Theatre's gross to a new low, despite big exploitation and advertising. The Atlanta Board of Review prohibited the picture from making its scheduled run at the Fox Theatre, even after \$2,500 had been spent promoting it. This particular case was carried to the courts on the Saturday morning before the opening engagement of the picture that afternoon, with the judge ruling that its exhibition would violate a city law. At the Paramount in Denver, it replaced NEW MORALS FOR OLD, which had limped through three disastrous days, only to fare little better than a few thousand dollars in a theatre that averaged just under \$9,000 per week.

The disparity of the FILM'S PRESS REVIEWS was astonishing. Hanging from outright condemnation to a subtle warning to exhibitors to shy away from this touchy piece of merchandise unless they had "the courage to go through with a play date." Almost all the reviews had this in common, an attempt to keep the younger patrons' morals from being corrupted



TOP RIGHT: The exterior of the Dime Museum, cut from all the release prints of FREAKS. BOTTOM RIGHT: An interior view of the museum also omitted from the final version. The box in the center of the set was for the "chicken-woman." BELOW: The set used for Hoss' estate, where the happy ending took place.



by the "shock" nature of the picture. Harrison's *Reports* commented: "Any one who considers this entertainment, should be placed in the pathological ward in some hospital. Terrible for children or for Sunday showing." Richard Hanger of the *Buffalo Times* echoed this warning with: "While the story may tax the credulity of the onlooker, it has the fascination of the horrible. It must surely be a nightmare spectacle for children and they had better be kept away." Similarly, *The New Yorker* chimed in with: "I don't think that everyone on earth should see it. It's certainly not for susceptible young people."

In the *Kansas City Star*, John C. Neffitt's caustic wordplay nearly burnt through the printed page with: "There is no excuse for this picture. It took a weak mind to produce it and it takes a strong stomach to look at it. The reason it was made was to make money. The reason liquor was made was to make money. The liquor interests allowed certain conditions of their business to become so disgraceful that we got prohibition. In 'FREAKS' the movies make their great step toward national censorship. If they get it, they will have no one to blame but themselves."

Harold Heffernan did not know just how right he was when he told the readers of the *Detroit News* that: "No such film has ever been produced before. It is reasonably certain that nothing like it ever will be attempted again."

As the steaming summer heat hit New York in early July, *FREAKS* crawled into the *Kalito*, with the result that both of these conditions sent the grosses staggering under the onslaught. *The New York Times* did not help to up the receipts as its critic pondered "whether it should be shown at the Rialto... or in, say, the Medical Centre." The ads in that newspaper carried a special warning: "Children will not be permitted to see this picture! Adults not in normal health are urged not to!"

One of the few critics who provided a rare in-

sight into a film he believed was truly a masterpiece of the macabre was Richard Natts, Jr., of the *New York Herald Tribune*. He noted that "his [Browning's] other pictures seem but whimsical nursery tales... It is obviously an unhealthy and generally disagreeable work, not only in its story and characterization, but also in its gay directorial touches. Mr. Browning can even make freaks more unpleasant than they would be ordinarily. Yet, in some strange way, the picture is not only exciting, but even occasionally touching."

In the same manner in which the film entered New York, it left in a whisper three weeks later. With the exception of several uneventful screenings in Europe, it crept into 30 years oblivion in the United States and the United Kingdom, the latter having banned the film until May 10, 1963.

For almost three decades *FREAKS* lay dormant until its resurrection as the official "horror" entry at the Cannes Festival Repertory in 1962. It soon began to attract some attention in France and the United Kingdom, and was revived in the United States one year later, a year after its long neglected and forgotten creator had suffered a fatal heart stroke. While Tod Browning, and to some extent Irving Thalberg, can only posthumously and belatedly be honored with the knowledge that their macabre sophistication was not at fault, but rather many years ahead of their time, fitting homage is paid to Browning by many contemporary audiences who continuously salute his creative abilities. *FREAKS* has been constantly applauded by most of those who see it, prompting many to praise it. Among them, Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* who called it: "one of the perhaps half-dozen great horror films of all time." This is the ultimate irony; that *FREAKS* was able to return after its long absence so that its beautiful study of the "ugly" in life could be recast in a mold of timelessness.

## Re-Evaluating A Screen Classic

by RONALD V. BORET

Over the period of the last forty years, one particular horror film from the early thirties has continued to garner increasing laurels and plaudits until it has eventually arrived at such a pinnacle of respect and awe that it is considered to be almost singularly immune from any form of criticism, safely enjoying a reputation of being the most startling and terrifying example of cinematic horror of all time. A film so supposedly shocking, that most contemporary critics pinned it as being "so revolting" and "nauseating," leading many exhibitors of the day to refuse to book the picture after its initial opening; so horrifying, that even subsequent releases of the film under various other titles (i.e., *THE MONSTER SHOW*; *FORBIDDEN LOVE*; *NATURE'S MISTAKES*) including the original, failed to draw any greater crowds than the first release had. The film was banned in Great Britain until 1963 and, to this day, has never been televised in any country anywhere in the world. Subsequently, its absence from television coupled with the general audiences' massed reaction against it has made the film something of a hard-to-screen item until recent times, when its legendary fame as the "ultimate" in horror films led to frequent showings in metropolitan art houses and college campuses across the nation. But in years of condemnation coupled with that old film argument (i.e., that any major old horror film from the thirties is automatically regarded as a "classic" have sustained a legend...a legend which has never quite been justified by the film itself.

This then, is a broadly-stated, personal interpretation of the fame which has grown up over the years around Tod Browning's 1932 production of *FREAKS*. That there at least was a legend there is no doubt. Early issues of the professional monster magazines such as *Fantasy Monsters of Filmland* and *The Galle of Frankenstein* lauded the film's merits, the latter publication citing period reviews and running a half-acre of graphs in their fourth number which only served to further what the appe-

ties of these who had not yet had the opportunity of seeing the film for themselves. As with other unseen films of the time, such as *THE GHOUL* and *MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM*, the publication of choice stills, reinforced with lavish praise, served only to perpetuate the legend that the film was an unqualified masterpiece to a great many people who had only recently become interested in early horror films. Since that time the greatness of both *THE GHOUL* and *MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM* has been somewhat shattered by the rediscovery of both films, but while the weaknesses of these films have been discussed along with their laudable qualities, the deficiencies of *FREAKS* have all but been ignored or purposely overlooked. It is with this view in mind...to place *FREAKS* in a more proper perspective as a horror film... that this review is being undertaken.

Regarding the legend surrounding *FREAKS*, Carlos Clarens has written: "That *FREAKS* was made at all is extraordinary. That it was made at Metro...seems hard to believe." The author's statement may be a bit of hyperbole. *FREAKS* went into production during a time when the sincerity, creativity and quality of screen gothic was at its all-time highest peak. With the near-phenomenal success of both *DRACULA* and *FRANKENSTEIN*, it is to be wondered that all of Hollywood's major studios immediately sensed the box-office gold that lay in the making of these grim tales of escapist fantasy? Surely, there can be no denying that M-G-M was anxious to reap the profits that horror films often offered to provide, and although they never gained production towards a set program of films in the macabre genre (as Universal, RKO and other studios did), M-G-M, it may be recalled, had released an impressive number of weird melodramas in the previous decade, featuring, as often as not, Len Chaney in some new and bizarre role, with Tod Browning at the helm.



The M-G-M silents. **THE UNHOLY THREE** (1925), **THE SHUN** (1927) and **THE UNHOLY THREE** (also 1927), all directed by Browning, depicted mystical abnormalities within the context of a melodramatically devised screenplay when horror films were more commonly classified under the general heading of mysteries. With the arrival of the talkie era and the straight supernatural thriller replacing the standard old house cloaked killer vehicles, **FREAKS** emerges as a logical, if indeed, ultimate extension of these previous films, not to mention M-G-M policy.

Bob Thomas' recent biography, **Thalberg**—being an account of the life and times of Irving G. Thalberg, Metro's production genius of the twenties and thirties—reveals one anecdote of how **FREAKS** came about. "I want you to give me something even more horrible than **FRANKENSTEIN**," Thalberg ordered scenarist Willis Goldbeck. Goldbeck collaborated with Leon Gordon in developing a script "about bizarre happenings among freaks of a circus sideshow," based on an obscure Ted Robbins' story entitled "Spurs" which had appeared in **Woman's Magazine** some nine years before. Their original draft was then submitted to the youthful M-G-M executive who was said to have replied, "I asked for something horrifying and I got it." Thalberg went on to personally sponsor the production against massive studio opposition, eventually convincing Louis B. Mayer that the film had the potential to equal the financial success of the Universal vehicles.

Another story—this version related in Peter Haining's anthology of filmed gothic fiction, **The Ghoulies**, and vaguely supported by text in the original studio pressbook—places the inspiration of the film with Harry Harries, the midget actor

who had appeared in both film versions of Robbins' novel, **The Unholy Three**. According to this account, Browning had been searching for a property he could adapt to the screen in which he could prominently feature his old friend, and the actor in turn had suggested "Spurs" to the director, who then approached M-G-M via Thalberg.

Whichever story is true (if either; although it seems more logical to believe that Browning would have been connected with the project from the beginning if only for his prior acquaintance with Robbins' work and former background with traveling circuses—) there is no room for argument that **FREAKS** owes its entire basis to "Spurs" and it is fascinating not only to compare the original fiction with the finished celluloid work, but to speculate what kind of film **FREAKS** might have come off as had it been faithfully translated to the screen. Like the film, the original story is set within a small traveling circus somewhere in the contemporary French countryside. A circus midget, Jacques Courbe, falls hopelessly in love with the troupe's bareback rider, the lovely Jeanne Marie, who accepts his proposal of marriage only when she learns that he has just inherited a huge sum of money. She and her lover, the strong man Simon Lefleur, plan to wed as soon as Jacques dies from old age, which Jeanne believes will be soon. During the wedding celebration, Jeanne becomes drunk and belittles her small bridegroom, declaring loudly that she could carry him on her shoulders from one end of France to the other. A year passes, a year in which Jeanne Marie and her "Hercules" are separated from one another, Jacques having retired from the circus and taken his wife with him to his large inherited estate. One day, Simon is startled to find a haggard and barely recognizable Jeanne Marie standing before his



wagon door. The woman pleads with him to protect her from her midget husband, declaring that he has never forgotten nor forgiven her for her callous remark that she should carry him on her shoulders from one end of the country to the other. Each day, a virtual prisoner, she has been forced to carry Jacques from dawn till dusk down lonely stretches of rural road, after which he has accordingly marked off the miles traversed, this to be continued until the total distance has been covered. Jeanne has been unable to resist or escape because of the midget's powerful and intelligent wolf-dog, St. Kuntache, who accompanies his master everywhere. As Jeanne concludes her woe-filled tale, Jacques enters the wagon, mounted on his canine steed, a little sword at his side. Simon attempts to prevent Jacques from rebuking Jeanne, but the strong man's brute strength is of little use as the ferocious animal pins his helplessly to the floor, and Courbe silently dispatches him with his blade. Jeanne, completely dumbfounded and resigned to her fate, places her small mate upon her shoulders and weakly trudges off in the direction of their home, Jacques's tiny "squire" threatening to prick her if she falters in her pace. The final irony of the narrative comes when the owner of the circus notices the departure of his old friends from a long distance off. He mistakenly recalls to himself how unkind it is of Jeanne Marie to continue to hennep her husband in such a cruel manner as carrying him around on her shoulders.

For the screen adaptation, Browning and his writers not only chose to discard the story's original title, but vastly altered the characters of Jeanne Marie, Simon and Jacques as well. Hence, Jeanne Marie and Simon became Cleopatra and Hercules, names which perfectly suited their physical beauty and strength. Conversely, the Jacques Courbe character became Hans and, rather than being a somewhat vindictive fiend, he is a

thoroughly pitiable but proud man, thereby making the contrast between goodness and evil all the more apparent and rendering it impossible for audiences to mentally ally themselves with Cleopatra or Hercules in the film's finale, as it was possible to do with Jeanne and Simon in the original story.

The director's intentions seem two-fold in retrospect; firstly, to film an entirely different and unique type of horror film...utilizing actual "monstrousities" culled from circuses and sideshows the world over. Secondly, to show audiences--many of whom were unquestionably familiar with traveling freak shows at this time--that the "things" they paid a dime to laugh or shudder at were completely normal in every respect but their bodies, and were governed by a "code" which was "...a law unto themselves. Offend one...and you offend them all!" Through the Barker's spiel in the opening reel, Browning carefully sets his stage not only for the terrors that follow, but for what he apparently hoped would lead to a far greater understanding and acceptance for the select minority of people he has spent so much of his early life among. From the beginning of the film our curiosity is aroused (we do not see the "thing" which was once the beautiful Cleopatra in the enclosed pit, just the crowd's horrified reaction as the Barker points her out), and our nerves set to witness the strange and unusual. Not entirely surprising, the first of the horrors released comes as the horror of revulsion. After a short introductory sequence in which Cleopatra, Hans and Frieda (Hans' midget love) are presented to us, the film cuts to a wooded glade in which a landowner and his caretaker are briskly walking towards a place where the caretaker warns there are "horrible, twisted things...crawling, whining, laughing!" The description is nearly as unnerveing as the freaks' first appearance...as weird, contorted shapes dancing about in a small clearing. The audience has been prepared for this but the sequence is handled adroitly with a great amount of restraint and finesse in an effort to minimize the revulsion. Browning immediately achieves this effect through the character of the circus owner, Madame Fataleant, a woman who easily gains our sympathy when she pleads her "children's" plight to the landowner. Any revulsion we may have felt vanishes at the sight of the freaks fleeing to their guardian in fear of the two men who have momentarily entered their world, and when the compassionate landowner understandingly permits the circus people to remain on his land...to play in the sunshine like normal children...he is graciously thanked by all the freaks. In the many brief scenes which follow this throughout the



Scenes from the famous "banquet sequence" during which the freaks perform the ritual that will make Hans' new bride "one of them." TOP LEFT: Angelo Rosetto allows Koo-Koo to take a sip from the "loving cup." BOTTOM LEFT: Johnny Zak lends the wedding chant as the cup is passed from mouth to mouth. BELOW: Koo-Koo atop the banquet table during the wedding feast.





An unusual publicity shot taken during the filming of *FREAKS* with the circus performers shaking screaming fists at Olga Baclanova.

first half of the film, Browning continues to play upon our sympathies on behalf of the freaks, striving to illustrate how completely ordinary and similar their everyday lives are to our own, dwelling alternately on their moments of happiness and misery. We come not only to side with the freaks, but to accept them as our friends without reservation and after a while their appearance no longer serves to terrify or startle, since each sequence is so subtly framed with humor, rather than horror, in mind.

It is by approaching his work in such a manner that Browning commits a major error from a horror standpoint. He sacrifices a strong gothic theme and provides instead a large number of disjointed trivial scenes, many of which last no longer than a minute or two, and which have little bearing on the primary plot thread—that of Cleopatra's scheme to marry little Hans, then murder him for his money. The result is that in trying to present too much of a portrayal of circus life and its performers, the director has partially failed to sustain a mood of horror. He only initiates this atmosphere during the latter portion of the film and, even then, there are occasional cuts to unneeded comic relief.

Gregory Zlatirka makes a few noteworthy points in his review, "FREAKS—A Study In Revulsion," in an old issue of *Cinefantastique* written around 1967, when he relates a particular trait inherent in most of Browning's films, this being that "the story in a Tod Browning film was always of secondary importance." Browning himself admitted this in an interview conducted in 1928, and it manifests itself in all of his sound horror films. His strength was in the creation of a death-like atmosphere, usually conceived and executed at a remarkably slow pace, unrelieved

(or perhaps unshattered?) by a musical score.

Zlatirka went on, stating: "Browning's inability to keep the story value of his work up to the standards set by his atmosphere of doom and horror has always been a drawback to his sound films." Once again, unfortunately correct. The most often recalled portions of his greatest films from the thirties, such as the first reel of *DRACULA*; the sequences with the vampires stalking silently about cobwebbed walls in *YARE OF THE VAMPIRE*; or the shrunken human "dolls" scurrying about in the dead of night on their missions of vengeance in *THE EMBLISHED*, are all examples of Browning at his best.

I personally find it somewhat peculiar that no one (to my knowledge) has ever dissected all the facets which compose the memorable highlights from *FREAKS*, for an examination reveals that these scenes do not singularly rely on the appearance of the freaks themselves. The horror in *FREAKS* is not, and should never be confused with the horror of "revulsion," as Zlatirka implies, for Browning does everything in his power to see that this feeling of initial revulsion towards the freaks is destroyed... does so very early in the film, and continues to harp upon their inner normality throughout while stressing the hypocritical characters of Hercules and Cleopatra. There is no rebuking that there may be a feeling of revulsion connected with *FREAKS*, but I find it far more related to still photographs than to the film itself. When I first saw the pinheads pictured within the pages of *The Castle of Frankenstein*, it had a profound impact on me. I was not frightened by the stills, but having never been exposed to this type of "monster," and assuming that they committed crimes as horrendous as their appearance, the feeling within me could only



be described as revulsion, a distaste in looking at them. Of course, I was much younger at that time and somewhat naive as well, but I continued to harbor these uncomfortable feelings, believing that when I ultimately did see the film, that I would leave the theater with a similar revulsion. You may imagine my surprise when, after having finally seen *FREAKS*, I left the film with a combination of disappointment and appreciation; disappointment in the film as a so-called horror "classic," but somewhat of an appreciation for its director who was able to destroy this previously held distasteful feeling. The reason that the film's effect is incomparable to the stills not only stems from Browning's sympathetic character development, but also because he never allows his camera to dwell upon the freaks' appearances for any great length of time in an effort to shock or horrify. The protracted closeups of the freaks are scenes in which they are portrayed as harmless and friendly beings; when at last they are provoked into evoking the code which binds them together against the outside world, the scenes are horrifying in the extreme, but so too, are they exceptionally brief.

Looking back at another of Zukirka's comments, that "the most moving scenes that make this film stand out, all belong to the freaks," one must acknowledge that the more unique sequences (such as the wedding feast) are perhaps the "most moving" ones, however, the segments of horror within the film belong as much to Browning's feeling for the characters and the sympathy Henry Victor and Olga Baclanova as they do the actual freaks. Baclanova's line, "Midwinters... are not strong!" delivered shortly after Cleopatra has learned of Hans' inheritance and the inspiration to use poison to kill him, is far more horrible in its mere implication than the continual appearance of the malformed attractions in their daily activities, whether it be the birth of the bearded lady's baby, or one of the several romantic encounters between stuttering comic Roscoe Ates and the charming Siamese twins. Another sequence which is particularly effective in terms of mood, is the one near the conclusion of the film in which the midget, dwarf and legless boy are assembled in Cleo's wagon after the artist returns from her evening performance. The ominous playing of the ocarina is terribly reminiscent of Igor's similar melody in the much later *SUN OF FREAKS*, but far more chilling in evoking a mood of ominous peril, not so much because of the characters' deformities (midgets and dwarfs having been used in many films prior to *FREAKS* and thereby familiar to film-goers), but because of the way in which Browning has staged the scene: the trio calmly waiting for Cleo's return...her subsequent fear of their intentions...the mounting storm outside... all embraced by long stretches of prolonged silence.

There is also no denying that the shot of the human torso, a knife held tightly between his teeth, squirming through the mud towards the mortally wounded Hercules is a peak of filmatic



A shot taken during the filming of the "thunderstorm" sequence. Note the camera and microphone boom on top of the crane.

terror, but again, a great deal of the scene's success lies with the staging of the sequence during the storm-filled night, and in a mob of screaming people slowly moving towards a helpless individual. The brief camera shot of the freaks coming after Cleopatra is terrifying as well, but it is the way in which they are revealed to us (for just a fraction of a second...in a flash of lightning) that momentarily shakes us. We have not seen any of the freaks pursuing the woman, and it is only when she pauses to turn back to confirm her safety, that we share in her disbelief, and the horror becomes all the more appalling when we realize that her pursuers are our new-found friends. This raises an important question. Would *FREAKS* have been any less powerful a horror film per se if Browning had not made use of the more unfamiliar of the freaks? Surely, the film's uniqueness would have been reduced, if the director had replaced the pin-heads, armless girl, half-man/half-woman, et al with physically normal actors in makeup (resulting in an effect perhaps, not unlike the one achieved in *ISLAND OF LOST SOULS*), but would the sequence have been any the less frightening? Stretching the thesis even further, the film as a whole may have been improved upon, for had Browning been able to forsake his self-imposed task of building audience respect for the freaks, it would have permitted him to dwell on his atmosphere and major theme to a much greater extent, thereby accentuating the grand guignol.

What else might Browning have altered for the better? He could have aroused the shame of his viewers (and painted a more complete picture of circus life as well) had he presented the freaks performing in their actual acts along with the abundance of behind-the-scenes events. This is one phase of the performers' existence Browning tends to almost entirely ignore. Although the Desai Saper prints may be lacking some footage (including a scene in which Hercules is depicted wrestling a lion; only a second or so of this scene remains in the standard available prints), it is questionable that there were many other such sequences incorporated into the original version. Would not scenes of mazed audiences...gaping...peering...hooting...at the freaks, have served as well in arousing the audiences' respect and understanding for the carnival people as well as illustrating all the more clearly which group actually is the more monstrous?

The film's climax--the night in which the freaks seek their justice upon the strong man and trapeze artist, followed by the epilogue showing the horrendous hem-creatures--have long been touted as supreme examples of screen horror, and are unquestionably a major reason why *FREAKS* has remained a cinematic legend. They are indeed highlights of the film, the torrential downpour being Browning tour-de-force in which the only sounds are assorted groans, screams and the elements of nature. Nevertheless, for all that can be said of it, the chase sequence is far too brief. We must be content with

Publicity still featuring (from left to right): Ted Browning, Johnny Eck, Frances O'Connor, Peter Robinson and Koo-Koo.



the one glimpse of Cleo's face and the freaks in pursuit the camera affords us, although a longer series of shots, with Cleo racing...falling...struggling to make her way through the forest with various innocent shadows playing amongst the trees and undergrowth, climaxing in a similar way, would have made the sequence even more memorable. There remain, admittedly so, the couple of marvelous close-ups of the freaks propelling themselves through the mire towards the mortally wounded Hercules (there appears to be some footage missing here, for the strong man's fate is never actually explained in action or dialogue; an original plan was to have him emasculated, but as the film exists now, it is assumed that the freaks murdered him). Had Browning chosen to insert additional shots such as these, the result would have been even more satisfying.

The closing shot of Cleopatra—now something not entirely human, or so it appears—has long been a source of lengthy commentary as well. While most critics have readily agreed that the scene is utterly superb from the standpoint of sheer shock and surprise, the ridiculousness of the costume has long fallen under debasement. How could a lovely woman be turned into a feathered monstrosity? The answer is amazingly simple.... She wasn't! The freaks have obviously mutilated her face, cut out her tongue, and amputated her limbs, however the feathered costume is nothing other than something she has been clothed in to give her the appearance of a hen-woman. Taking this one step further (an exaggerated step, I fully realize, although there is nothing that disproves this theory), it is entirely possible to view the entire story the Barker relates to his customers—from the flashback to the carnival up until the time of the freaks' revenge—as a purely fictional account dreamed up by the showman to dupe the crowd at the film's off-set. Looking at the climax in this way makes it entirely conceivable that the creature is no more than a human actress disguised to appear as horrible as the actual freaks in the sideshow, hardly a unique trick even by today's standards. One remark in the film somewhat serves to substantiate this surmise; the Barker reveals in his introduction that a royal prince shot himself for love of Cleopatra, a statement which cannot possibly be rationalized when we realize that the gold-digging female would never have allowed such a life of luxury to escape her grasp, even if it meant marrying a midgit! This may be an inconse-

quential flaw, but if it is, and we accept the film's final denouement as shown, then we must in turn reject Browning's continual plea that the freaks are normal in every respect save the physical. The question which then immediately arises is whether mentally adjusted people would resort to such a terrible revenge, or rather, would they inform the authorities and allow the law to take its due course (as one of the physically normal friends of the freaks threatens Hercules she will do if the villainous pair will not abandon their scheme of slowly poisoning Hans). Even if one does decide to accept Browning's conclusion, it is impossible to imagine most of the freaks as potential torturers or murderers, even under the most extreme of circumstances. Browning has given us too much of a detailed look into their lives to convince us otherwise. By suggesting that FREAKS may be regarded in a way other than the one intended, I realize I am leaving myself open to the same criticism leveled at these critics who have imposed an abundance of Freudian phallic symbols upon KING KONG, but while the implications regarding the Cooper-Schoedsack production seem far-fetched in an unrealistic way, accepting FREAKS as a tall tale devised by a loud-mouthed showman makes the M-G-M film more believable...as both THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI and DEAD OF NIGHT are made more convincing by having their horror content justified through the devices of a "madman's mind" or "recurring nightmare."

Technically, FREAKS is a primitive example of film-making, even by 1932 standards. The camera work and settings are hardly on the same level as other genre efforts of the day, notably Fox's GRANDU THE MAGICIAN, Paramount's ISLAND OF LOST SOULS, United Artists' THE BAT WHISPERS or Metro's own MASK OF FU MANCHU. The previously mentioned over-abundance of trivial sequences indicate that Browning or editor Basil Wrangell strayed in allowing the first half of the film to plod along so dismally through the countless barely related scenes. On the other hand, the lack of a musical score does not detract from one's enjoyment of the film, for like Browning's other horror films, music was an unnecessary quality in sustaining the director's particular type of mood. Of the featured performers, Olga Baclanova and Henry Victor individually distinguish themselves in their roles of beauty and strength personified. Not only are they overbearing in their characterizations, but they deliciously over-act throughout their scenes, adding yet another dimension to their villainy by infusing their roles with gross and semi-moronic qualities. Witness Victor's constant booming and pride in his physique, or Baclanova's side-splitting howls of delight whenever a freak is mutilated or injured in even a minor way. Top-billed actor Wallace Ford and fence co-star Leila Hyams are also effective in such more restrained characters, their major function being to provide

LEFT: Leila Hyams laughs at the antics of a clown (believed to be Wallace Ford) in a scene not included in the final version. BELOW: Roscoe Ates leads a helping hand to the Nelson twins.



yet another link between the theater audience and the freaks themselves. The freaks--The superbly cast Harry and Daisy Earles excluded--are not called upon to display any abundance of thespian talents but merely to display themselves as if to silently illustrate that they are not as inhuman as they visually appear.<sup>3</sup> In minor roles, Michael Visaroff (the innkeeper in both DRACULA and MARK OF THE VAMPIRE) and Albert Conti (the Lieutenant in THE BLACK CAT) are ideally cast as caretaker and landowner respectively.

Since its release some forty years ago, FREAKS has inspired one off-shoot as well as a semi-remake, these films being 20th Century-Fox's 1961 release, HOUSE OF THE DAMNED, and the independently distributed SHE-FREAK (1967). The former was set in the traditional bizarre castle, the spooks in this case being no more than a group of displaced circus freaks comprising a Giant (Richard E. Kahl), Fat Woman, Legless Woman and Leclerc Man, who had remained on at the castle after the death of the last tenant, a former carnival showman who had befriended them and given them a home. When a young architect and his wife arrive to survey the castle for a friend's law firm which handles the estate, they are met with the expected haunted house gimmicks in an attempt to frighten them away. Dependent on dark stairways and shock appearances of the freaks to terrify, HOUSE OF THE DAMNED averaged as little more than a horror programmer. Far more intriguing was SHE-FREAK, produced by the then-king of sex and sadism horror films, David E. Friedman. As in former Friedman vehicles, BLOOD FEAST, GOLDEN MR. BLOOD RED and TWO THOUSAND MANIACS, the screenplay was devised to exploit the horror elements to their fullest. The basic theme of a callous woman who joins a traveling freak-show, marries its owner for his money, then joins with the ferris-wheel foreman in murdering him was lifted without credit from FREAKS, as was the film's climax, in which the freaks band together to

revenge themselves upon the girl, turning her into a scoured reptile-woman. Bathing in delights such as a jar containing a pickled two-headed baby, Friedman's production failed to garner the film any special critical notice coming as it did, at a time when the blood and guts horror film was generally accepted thine. Lacking the intelligence and sincerity that went into FREAKS, it serves to prove if nothing else, that a film like FREAKS would not be condoned by the public in our modern world, a world which has experienced far too many horrors, fictional and actual, to be disturbed over a film featuring circus freaks.

Today, the original FREAKS can only be regarded as an exceptional curiosity from the early days of the horror talkies, relying on two or three scenes to sustain its "classic" status. However, for 1932 audiences...the same movie-goers who shrunk back in fear at the sight of Chaney's unsmiling visage in THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. Who found such primitively filmed efforts as DRACULA truly horrifying and who had yet to experience real-life monsters, such as Hitler & Eichmann, the sight of such monstrosities as displayed in FREAKS must have had far greater effect than the reaction it has on current audiences. Browning's efforts to make the unnatural attractions appear more normal obviously did not succeed with those contemporary masses; the feeling of revulsion and the unfamiliarity with horror films being too difficult to overcome for too many of them in spite of Browning's immense talents. Nowadays, these talents are far more successful in attaining their original goal, and much of what was horrible is minimized. By accepting his work as he originally intended, at least in part, with a great deal of sympathy and understanding, Browning is revealed as a director who was, in his own way, far ahead of his peers. That Irving Thalberg supported the project also says a lot for his own sophistication towards the film medium.

#### FOOTNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>One mystery concerning FREAKS, which has yet to be satisfactorily explained, is the existence of a production still, circa 1930, showing Tod Browning helping Lon Chaney into a hen costume similar to that which Olga Sanzoles wore in the film's climax. The still (reproduced in Famous Monsters #31) might imply that Browning had the concept of the film in mind before Chaney's death in August of 1930. If true, this would bear grave suspicion on the "Thalberg Story."

<sup>2</sup>The title FREAKS was not as original as it appears. Walt Lee's *Reference Guide to Fantastic Film: Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror* (Vol. I) reveals that Jeter Film produced a silent FREAKS in 1910. The film was produced & directed by Allan Card, featured William Tracy and Max Ascher, among others, and could be termed a borderline horror film because of its use of actual circus freaks.

<sup>3</sup>Angelo Rossetti, the dwarf in FREAKS, later went on to play in several other minor horror roles, usually as one of Boris Lugosi's familiars, including SPOOKS RUN WILD (1941), THE CORN PARISHES (1942) and SCARED TO DEATH (1947). For years a familiar sight at Hollywood newbies, he recently appeared with Lon Chaney and J. Carroll Nash in DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN.

#### THE INVISIBLE MAN (continued from page 33)

1935, Universal Pictures Corp. Presented by Carl Laemmle; Produced by Carl Laemmle, Jr.; Directed by James Whale; Screenplay by H. C. Sherriff; Original novel by H. G. Wells; Photographed by Arthur Edson; Special Effects Photography by John F. Fulton; Retake Photography & Miniatures by John Mesall; Art Direction by Charles D. Hall; Edited by Ted Kent; Makeup by Jack Pierce; 8 reels/70 minutes.

Cast: Claude Rains (Jack Griffin), Gloria Stuart (Flora Cranley), Henry Travers (Dr. Cranley), William Harrigan (Dr. Kemp), Una O'Connor (Mrs. Hall), Forrester Harvey (Mr. Hall), Holmes Herbert (Chief of Police), E. E. Clive (Jaffers), Dudley Digges (Chief of Detectives), Harry Stubbs (Inspector Bird), Donald Stuart (Inspector Lane), Merle Tottenham (Milly), Dwight Frye (Reporter), John Carradine (Townsmen), Walter Brennan (Townsmen).

#### FOOTNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>*Variety* (December 8, 1931).

<sup>2</sup>*Variety* (January 5, 1932).

<sup>3</sup>H. C. Sherriff, *No Leading Lady* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1938).

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Conversation with H. C. Sherriff (August, 1971).

<sup>7</sup>Sherriff, *No Leading Lady*.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Variety* (June 27, 1933).

<sup>10</sup>Colin Clive, "The Woman Who Thrilled Me," *Picturegoer* (July 30, 1932). Interview by John Gladden.

<sup>11</sup>Jeanne Stein, "Claude Rains," *Film in Review* (November, 1932).

<sup>12</sup>*Variety* (August 29, 1933).

<sup>13</sup>*Variety* (June 27, 1933).

<sup>14</sup>*Variety* (June 10, 1933).

<sup>15</sup>Sherriff, *No Leading Lady*.

<sup>16,17,18</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Variety* (November 30, 1932).

<sup>20</sup>*New York Times* (November 26, 1932).

<sup>21</sup>*Variety* (November 22, 1932).

<sup>22</sup>William Troy, *The Nation* (December 12, 1932).



# Ted Browning

## A FILMOGRAPHY

**INTRODUCTORY NOTE:** The following checklist consists of those films which were written and/or directed by Ted Browning. Those films which were not directed by Browning, yet were still authored by him, are marked with a double asterisk (\*\*). Before the title. To the best of my knowledge, all information included in the cast and credits is as accurate as the information from which the compiler has drawn. The comments after each release's production data represent my attempt to relay either the film's basic story, plot or structure, when I stray from that ideal and offer a value judgement, my only purpose is to clarify a critical aspect of the picture, even though it reflects my own opinion. Not included in this checklist are, obviously, those titles which remain unknown to myself. If any reader should know of such a film, the compiler would gratefully appreciate any information which could be supplied on them. Also not seen here are those films in which Browning appeared as an actor, the majority of the more than fifty one-reelers being released under the Korda brand label between March 1914 and February of the following year. Browning's first screen appearance as an actor seems to have been in *SCOUTING A TERRIBLE CRIME*, released by Biograph on October 3, 1913; his last was as the owner of a car in the modern segment of *D.W. Griffith's INTOLERANCE*, in which he is also mentioned as one of Griffith's assistant directors.

Many thanks to Monte Arnold, Dr. Gordon Beck, Ronald V. Borst, Dion McGrew, George C. Pratt, Charles Silver, Elliot Stein and anyone else I've carelessly overlooked. Release dates shown are either those on which the film was first screened to the public, or the "official" day of release as stated in production information--H.S.

**THE LUCKY TRANSFER** 1915  
 Reliance. 2 Reels (?); Released on March 10.  
 Cast: Mary Alden (Helen Holland), Margery Wilson (The Little Girl), Jack Hall (Jim Dodson), Thomas Hull (Jenson), Tom Wilson (Ford), Vester Pegg (A Crook), W.E. Lowery (A Crook).

Browning's first venture as a motion picture director displayed his melodramatic instincts with this detective tale of a girl reporter, who discovers the facts in a jewelry store robbery. Tracking the thieves to their shack, she is caught by the crooks before she can sneak away from their hideout. A dropped trolley transfer slip offers the police inspector assigned to the case the clue he needs to rescue the girl and

capture the gang.

**THE HIGHRIDERS** 1915  
 Majestic (Mutual). 2 Reels; Released on April 18.  
 Cast: Signe Auen (Maggie Gallagher), Eugene Pallette (Jack Donovan).  
 An atmospheric story of chinatown, set in a Western city locale. A rich melodrama filled with many thrilling incidents surrounds the plot which concerns a beautiful girl kidnapped by a gang of murderous Chinese.

**THE LIVING DEATH** 1915  
 Majestic (Mutual). 2 Reels. Released on June 5.  
 Cast: Fred A. Turner (Dr. Farrell), Billie West (Naida Farrell), Edward J. Peil (Tom O'Day).  
 "A drama of great strength, well acted and staged, and consequently most effective," read one of this film's reviews. Its exciting plot concerned a doctor who, embittered by the loss of his wife and son, becomes overly protective toward his daughter. In a desperate act, he diagnoses a rash on a would-be-son-in-law's wrist as leprosy, knowing it to be merely an irritation from poison ivy. His plan backfires, but he is able to save the girl and her lover with a timely confession, soon adding a blessing for their marriage.

**THE BURNED HAND** 1915  
 Majestic (Mutual). 2 Reels. Released on June 13.  
 Cast: Miriam Cooper (Marlette), W.E. Lowery (Her Father), Cora Drew (Her Mother), William Hinchley (Billy), Jack Dillon, Fred A. Turner, William Wolbert, Charles West, Violet Wilkey, Jack Hall.  
 Shortly after three college pals have vowed eternal friendship, the sweetheart of one of the triumvirate is kidnapped by her father, who has just divorced his wife. The cunning trio plot the girl's escape, but when the father catches them during the night he is able to burn the hand of the daughter's beau. The ending has one of the other chums injuring his own hand in the same manner to conceal his friend's identity.

**THE WOMAN FROM WARREN'S** 1915  
 Majestic (Mutual). 2 Reels; Released on June 20.  
 Cast: Lucille Young (Wyona Ware), Fred A. Turner (Fred Thompson), "Billy" Hutton (Alice Thompson), Charles West (Hanson Landring).  
 A villain indifferently forgets his obligations to a shop girl he wooed in his youth. Upon learning of his perfidy, she finds him at a summer resort playing the same game with the hotel landlord's



daughter. His evil doings are revealed by his first victim on the evening he had planned to carry out a mock marriage with the trusting daughter.

**LITTLE MARIE** 1915  
Reliance (Mutual). 2 Reels; Released on July 3.

Cast: Charles West (Beppo Puccini), Signe Auen (Marie Puccini), Walter Long, Tom Wilson. Charles West plays an Italian laborer whose vengeful attempt to detonate an explosive device in order to kill the foreman who has fared him, nearly backfires to destroy the daughter he adores. Theme quite familiar to *THE LIVING DEATH*. [NOTE: Signe Auen later changed her name to *Senta Owen*.]

**\*\*THE QUEEN OF THE BAND** 1915  
Reliance. 2 Reels; Released on October 10;  
Directed by Ray Myers; Story by Tod Browning.  
Cast: George Walsh (Ramar), Adoni Fovier (Zosh), Frank Fisher Bennett (Jack Lyle), Gladys Field (Ethel Dawn), Jack McDermott, Phil Gastrock, O. MacDiarmid, Jack Cogrove.  
Browning's story deals with the theft of one of the world's largest diamonds. The police seize upon a clue which leads to the arrest of an innocent messenger boy, who had delivered a fake message at the time of the jewel's disappearance. Ramar, the celebrated detective, goes to the store the day

after the robbery and ascertains that the monster gem had been stolen by Zosh, the international criminal who, with her gang of crooks, is later abducted by the ace private eye.

**\*\*SUNSHINE DAD** 1916  
Triangle-Fine Arts. 5 Reels; Released on April 23; Directed by Edward Dillon; Story by Chester Withey and Tod Browning; Working title: *A KNIGHT OF THE GARDEN*.  
Cast: De Wolf Hopper (Adonis Evergreen), Fay Tincher (Nidow Harrimore), Chester Withey, Max Davidson, Raymond Wells, Eugene Palette, Jewel Carmen, William De Wolf Hopper, Jr.  
In this original American comedy, De Wolf Hopper, his son, and a well trained lion share screen honors. The action concerns the theft of a sacred diamond band from a Hindu shrine and its ultimate return via a thrilling lion chase.

**\*\*THE MYSTERY OF THE LEAPING FISH** 1916  
Triangle-Keystone Comedy. 2 Reels; Released on June 11; Directed by John Emerson; Story by Tod Browning; Working title: *THE DETECTIVE*.  
Cast: Douglas Fairbanks (Coke Emmyday), Reggie Love (Inane, the little fish blower of Short Beach), Alfred D. Sears (Gent Rolling in Wealth), Alma Hubens (His Female Confederate), Tom Wilson (L.M. Keene, the Police Chief), Charles Stevens and George Hall (The Two Japanese Accomplices).  
The farcical wit of Browning the writer is evident in this comedy burlesque, part of which Browning may also have directed. An eccentric, mechanically-minded private detective is seen shooting cocaine into his palm as he cheerfully plays with one of his latest inventions. When the police ask him to locate a certain questionable character, Coke injects another dose of the drug into his hand before starting his search. In the climax, a final application of the drug allows him to handily dispose of the opium smuggler he has been stalking.

**PUPPETS** 1916  
Triangle-Fine Arts. 2 Reels; Released on August 13; Working Title: *THE MUMMY*.  
Cast: DeWolf Hopper (Pantaloon), Kate Toncray (The Widow), Jack Bramhall (Harlequin), Robert Lawlor (Clown), Pauline Starke (Columbine), Edward Bolles (Pierrot), Max Davidson (Scaramouche).

Upon recovery from an automobile accident, Browning displayed his directorial creativity with this poetic fantasy of the harlequinade, a story of mismatched loves told in actual pantomime. The settings were an innovation in themselves, being designed in pure blacks and whites, and all the characters dressed like puppets with their pantaloons, pierrot costumes, ballet effects and tights.

**EVERYBODY'S DOING IT** 1916  
Triangle-Fine Arts. 2 Reels; Release date and title uncertain (October?); Working title: *THE RESCUERS*.

LEFT: Lon Chaney as he appeared in his first film with Tod Browning, *THE WICKED DANCING* (1913). BELOW Browning with a Buddha during the production of the first version of *OUTSIDE THE LAW* (1911).





ABOVE LEFT: Chase and Browning discuss a scene during the shooting of *THE UNWOLY THREE* (1933). ABOVE: Violet Goss and Victor Metcalfe in a scene cut from *THE UNWOLY THREE* (1933). During a robbery on Christmas Eve, the girl looks up at the thief and cries, "Santa Claus!" LEFT: Browning directing a scene from *UNDER TWO FLAGS* (1933).



Cast: Tully Marshall (A Crook), Howard Gaye (Male lead), Lillian Webster (Ingenua Lead), Richard Cummings, Jack Brammell, George Stone, Violet Radcliffe.

This film and its immediate successor both appear to have been produced during September and October of 1916, yet their official release under the listed titles was not shown in the trade film weeklies. The basic story deals with a crook who corrupts a society youth and induces him to help in perpetrating a bold robbery by making the lad believe he is aiding a maiden in distress.

**THE DEADLY GLASS OF BEER** 1916  
Triangle-Fine Arts. 2 Reels; Also known as *THE FATAL GLASS OF BEER*; Release date and title uncertain (October?).

Cast: Teddy Sampson, Tully Marshall, Jack Brammell, Elmo Lincoln.

This two-reeler has to do with the adventures of a young man who falls heir to a fortune with the proviso in the will that he not drink beer until he has reached the age of 21.

Triangle-Fine Arts. 5 Reels; Released on November 5; Directed by George Seligman; Story & script by Tod Browning; Working title: *THE BEST BET*.

Cast: Dorothy Gish (Lois Brandon), Keith Armour (Jim Spencer), Carl Stockdale (Jarvis Johnson), Adele Clifton (Lucille Stone), Loyola O'Connor (Mrs. Brandon), Fred A. Turner (Phil Strong), Tom Wilson (Bill Golden), Joe Neery (A. Jockey).

Browning utilized the old horse racing theme in this average tale, with most of the story's background being supplied from memories of his days as an exercise boy and jockey at Churchill Downs. The simple plot dictated that the decent people's horse win out against the villain, allowing the mortgage to be paid and the young couple to be married.

**JIM BLUDSO** 1917  
Triangle-Fine Arts. 5 Reels; Released on February 4; Co-director: Wilfred Lucas; Script Adapted from the stage drama of the same name, based on the poems "Jim Bludso" and "Little Breeches" by John Hay, in his *Pike County Ballads*; Cameraman: Alfred G. Gosden.

Cast: Wilfred Lucas (Jim Bludso), Olga Grey (Gabrielle), George Stone ("Little Breeches"), Winifred Westover (Kate), Sam De Grasse (Ben Merrill), James O'Shea (Banty Tim), Monte Blue (Joe Hovers), Charles Lee (Tom Taggart).

This action-packed pictorialization of the old Mississippi River era, recalling the rivalry that existed between the famous riverboats, was Browning's first exposure to feature film production. In delivering this story of a picturesque community of ante-bellum days, there was no sacrifice of realism, especially during the climactic scenes, which included a fire aboard one of the steamers, the break-up of the town levee during a thunderstorm, and the flooding of the riverside village.

**A LOVE SUBLIME** 1917  
Triangle-Fine Arts. 5 Reels; Released on March 11; Co-director: Wilfred Lucas; Based on the short story "Orpheus" by Samuel Hopkins Adams, published on November 16, 1916 issue of *Collier's Magazine*; Working









**TOP LEFT:** Tod Browning, with a few more, in a production that Adam Jones the playing of THE SIGN with Anne Adams (1931). **BOTTOM LEFT:** An English production still from THE SIGN with Browning, carrying the child he never had in real life. **TOP RIGHT:** Conrad Nagel, Marjorie Day and Ted Danson, who died in the act of CONQUEST AFTER THE SIGN (1937). **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Len Chaney and Elin Fjeldner in the "Symphony" in CONQUEST AFTER THE SIGN.



## OUR FIRST

graphically pictured tragedy, father, irony and the apparent fatality of life itself.

**THE WISE KID** 1922  
Universal Special Attraction.  
1 Reels. Released on March 15.  
Screenplay by Wallace Clifton.  
From the short story "Wise Kids" by William Stevens McKeat.  
Published in the September 1911 issue of Metropolitan Magazine. Camera: William Flinn.  
Cast: Gladys Walton (Rosa Cooper), David M. Butler (Freddie Smith), Hattie Costley (Henry), C. Houston Hammond (Mr. Bennett), Hector V. Sarno (Tony Roston), Harry A. Barnes (Jefferson Cornbeck).

Revised seemed to rate this Hollywood fairy-tale story as average screen fare. The story concerns a cashier in a cafeteria who is at first attracted to the fine clothes & pleasing manner of a sweet-talking villain, but who finds true happiness with the honest baker boy she previously caught guilty of a theft.

**THE MAN UNDER COVER** 1922  
Universal Special Attraction.  
5 Reels. Released on April 10.  
Screenplay by Harvey K. Gates.  
From the story "The Man Under Cover" by Louis V. Wright. Camera: Victor H. Miller. Working titles: "The Man."

Cast: Herbert Rossman (Paul Burton), George Hernandez (Martin "Reddy" McFadden), Barbara Bedford (Margaret Langdon), William Courtwright (Myer Harper), George Webb (Col. E. James Wiley), Edward Tilton ("Cool Old" Chase), David Price (Matt Langdon), Willie Hays (Col. Falgout), Helen

Stone and Betty Blanton (The Kidnappers).  
This story about crooks was written by a crook, Louis Victor Wright, who was a life-timer at the Arizona State Penitentiary. He related a story of a prison pair who, after serving their time, go back to the home town of one of them who wants to see his youthful sweetheart. He discovers she has been seduced by a bunch of oil sheiks, and he sets out to beat them at their own game.

**UNDER TWO FLAGS** 1922  
Universal-Jewel De Luxe. 8 Reels. Released on September 14.  
Screenplay by Tod Browning (Adaptation), Edward T. Lowe, Jr. (Scenario & Adaptation) and Elliot Clawson (Scenario).  
From the novel and stage play, Under Two Flags by Ouida, the 1907 Pulitzer Prize in 1907.  
Assistant Director: Lou McCamp; Camera: William Flinn.  
Titles by Gardner Bradford; Pulp Editor: W. Fred Taggart; Art Direction by A. E. Somerville.  
Cast: Priscilla Dean (Cigarette), James Kirkwood (Dorrie Cass), Alvin Campbell (Victor), John Davidson (Sheik Ben Ali Hummed), Stuart Nelson (Dorcas de Chastelard), Ethel Gray Terry (Orlinda Corral), Robert Mosh (Sheik), Horton Lee (Sheik's Aide), Albert Pollock (Captain Tellier), W. E. Newberry (The Colonel).

With the race brought on by Bill Skell. For mere desertion, Browning's attempt to make Priscilla Dean the "female Napoleon" becomes, at best, a second-rate adventure

tale, doing very little to further the director's already notable reputation. Visually, the sets are attractive, yet fail to give a realistic Arabian air to the spectacle.

**BRILLIANT** 1925  
Universal-Jewel. 7 Reels.  
Released on September 10.  
Screenplay by Tod Browning and A. F. Fagot, from the stage play of the same name by John Galsworthy & Dely M. Andrew; Camera: William Flinn; Pulp Editor: W. Fred Taggart; Titles by Gardner Bradford.

Cast: Priscilla Dean (Grace Cook, alias Lucille Preston), Matt Moore (Capt. Arthur Jarvis), Wallace Beery (Julian Sapping), J. Farrell McDonald (Murphy), Rose Bruce (McDonald's Polly Voo), Edna Pickens (Nelly Norton), William V. Wong (Mr. Ali), Anna Mae Wong (Rose Lee), Grace Guerin (Nelly Neppert), Marie de Albert (Mrs. Neppert), William Moran (Mr. Neppert), Frank Lawton (Chief Nelly), Willie Marshall.  
Priscilla Dean plays the "Dapper Queen", an opium smuggler in London, who falls in love with the government agent sent to break up her operations. Her criminal past comes between them until an attack on the part of the native drug sellers reveals her to be a lunatic.

**WHITE TIGER** 1923  
Universal-Jewel. 7 Reels.  
Released on December 10.  
Screenplay by Charles Rayson & Tod Browning, from a story by Tod Browning; Camera: William Flinn; Pulp Editor: W. Fred Taggart; Art Direction by E. E. Somerville.

Titles by Gardner Bradford; Working title: "Tasty Raffles." Cast: Priscilla Dean (Ivyline Devereux), Matt Moore (Detective Dick Langworthy), Raymond Griffith (Ray Devereux), Wallace Beery (Will Devereux, alias "Colonel Bonnell"), Alfred Allen (Mike Rowan).

A head of international crooks comes to the United States to assume high society with a mechanical chess player. The lady thief (Ms. Dean) falls in love with one of the intended victims, and whom another member of the criminal trio becomes known as her long lost brother, it is discovered that the third crook has killed their father. Fate allows for the evil one's disposal, and the reformation of the others involved.

**THE DAY OF FAITH** 1923  
Goldwyn/Competition. 7 Reels.  
Released on October 11.  
Screenplay by Jane Maitis & Katherine Kavanagh, from the novel of the same name by Arthur Somers Roche, first published in 1913 in Collier's Weekly; Camera: William Flinn.

Cast: Eleanor Boardman (Jane Maynard), Frederick Tyrone (Gov. Michael Justice), Raymond Griffith (Tom Barnett), Ford Sterling (Montreal Sam), Ruby Leffort (Cecily Maynard), Wallace McDonald (John Justice), Charles Conklin (Fryg Barry), Jean Mercer (Ed Johnson's Child), Howard Mordant (Uncle Mortimer), Winter Hall (Frank Desmond), Russell King (Simons), Jack Savitt (Oss Johnson), Frederick Furr (Marilyn Moore), John Curry (Cassidy), Henry Herbert (Simon)











# REVERBERATIONS

(continued from page 4)

the script is pure Siegel (Peckinpah is a very good director, but he never produced anything great as a writer; witness his script for *THE GLORY GUYS*), as is the emphasis on the theme of the loner versus a hostile society where colorless, unfeeling people rule. (Check out Siegel's *THE LINCOLN*, *DIRTY HARRY* and *MAJAGAN*). Whether science fiction or not, the treatment and subject emphasis are the same. Other than missing a very important point, it was a well-handled article, but I don't think the film was conceived as a "testament to the true nobility of man" because the moral of the film seemed to be that man must never lose his animal instincts, never become so intellectual that his sexual needs and other basic drives are forgotten. That "nobility" business smacks of what the pop people were offering, not what our hero was striving to retain.

Richard Manello  
Brooklyn, New York

The biography of Rohmer referred to in the last paragraph of John Parman's excellent article has now been published: *Masters of Mystery* by Gay Van Allen and Elizabeth Schaefer, editing and annotated by K. E. Brinay (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972, \$10 hardcover, \$4.00 paper). The book has little material directly related to the films, unfortunately. However, it does one positive service in disposing of that persistent myth that Rohmer was paid four million dollars for dramatic rights to *Fu Manchu* in 1955. The real story, in all its depressing detail, is told in the last chapter of the biography.

Some, but not all, of the episodes of the Stoll silent *Fu Manchu* serials are listed in the National Film Archive Catalogue (Part III: Silent *FILM* Films, 1895-1929), published by the British Film Institute in 1966. The descriptions given there, it seems likely that these episodes were more like individual two-reel short subjects than chapters of a serial. The early *Fu Manchu* books themselves were not novels, but series of connected short stories, and it is easy to match these stories with the titles or plot summaries of the film episodes. The parts of *THE MYSTERY OF DR. FU-MANCHU* (note the hyphen) appear to have been drawn from all three of the early *Fu Manchu* books. Incidentally, the 1625-foot length mentioned by Mr. Parman for "The Cry of the Night-hawk" seems to have been typical; some episodes were even longer—"The Fiery Hand" is listed as 2058 feet. These lengths do not seem out of line for fifteen- or twenty-minute episodes.

The Karloff *MASK OF FU MANCHU* has just been released to theaters again, as a part of a triple bill (with *MARK OF THE VAMPIRE* and the Manoulian *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*). It was a pleasure to see it again, jingoistic dialogue and all.

It was disappointing not to see more information on the 1958 TV pilot for the projected *Fu Manchu* series. It seems to be difficult to get details about this film, but is of interest as being the only *Fu Manchu* film whose script was written by Rohmer himself (in collaboration with Mrs. Rohmer).

Robert E. Brinay  
Salem, Massachusetts

Thank you for your most superlative issue to date. *PROTON* has certainly matured into the most polished product exploring the fantasy film genre, a serious & honest attempt without becoming brittle, and its calibre has yet to be approached by your best competition. The diversity of elements

best competition. The diversity of elements in #22 made for delightful reading.

Jim Wuerroski's critique of *THE THING* was expressed & organized very well, as was the pictorial layout. I enjoyed the way the film's numerous characterizations were isolated and analyzed, with emphasis on each as integral parts of the story's development. The brilliance of the production is demonstrated in the fact that even the talky, pedestrian scenes come off with wit & gusto—segments that tended to fall flat in other science fiction films of the decade. Interesting to learn in

the interview that it was Tobey who innovated much of the overlapping dialogue, but it was obviously Hawks who wrapped the package. Actual direction of the film seems to point to Hawks as it is somewhat enigmatic that a man (Wyby) could deliver such directorial magnitude in *THE THING* and follow it up with the 1 *MARRIED JOAN* series!

Largely ignored and often overlooked in *THE THING* was actor John Bierkes as Dr. Chapman, whose mere presence enhanced many of the scenes. Altho deprived script-wise, Bierkes seemed to dominate many of the shots with his gaunt, interminable stare and the few lines that were given to him were delivered with a calm, straight-forward logic. Bierkes was cast in countless minor roles following *THE THING*, but appeared in only six other films of a fantastic nature: *ABEY* & *COSTELLO MEET DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE* (1954), *THE NAKED JUNGLE* (1955), *DAUGHTER OF DR. JEKYLL* (1957), in which he was burdened with some abominable lines), *PREMATURE BURIAL* (1963), *THE MAINTAINED PACE* (1963) and *X, THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES* (1963). I don't believe he's done anything since.

Jim's analysis of Tieckin's score was well-related to the sequences mentioned. Another of Tieckin's statements that has been indelibly etched in my mind was his use of blaring trumpets as the crew spread out "trying to determine the shape of the thing." The passage ends with the thump of a kettledrum, and we hear nothing more but the Arctic winds and the awe of the men who have found a flying saucer. Also memorable was Tieckin's use of the celesta as the electric blast melted the ice, followed by the unearthly wail of the theramin as the Thing loomed over Barnes.

Much welcomed was David Allen's brilliant perspective on animation films. As a frustrated animator & a former disciple of Harryhausen and the like, I have nothing but the highest admiration for Allen's talents. His animation of Kang for Volkswagen bears a most remarkable fidelity to the original. I would have to agree with Allen on the inherent ramifications of some productions. It is somewhat disconcerting that some productions with the most remarkable animation effects can simultaneously but unintentionally become the paltheaters of stop-motion cinema. Special thanks to Mark Wolf for his pictorial contributions. Never before have I seen such candid coverage of Harryhausen & Banford!

As much as I admire Ron Borst's untiring efforts, I would tend to agree with Gary Svekla about his checklists. Ron is indeed a perfectionist as he leaves not a stone unturned, and I guess to satisfy the completist--and himself--it would be self-defeating

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to omit anything that exists. But checklists, no matter how perfect, tend to border on tedium, especially when run in tandem causing a considerable amount of eye fatigue. It would seem more appropos to place them well apart from each issue. Ron's resources & chronologies are, nevertheless, mind-boggling.

Bob Sheridan composed a thought-provoking statement on *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. The film incidentally, went through a major title change either before or directly after its Sept. 1956 release in the U.S., being quoted in some sources as *THEY CAME FROM ANOTHER WORLD*. Both titles seem a bit cumbersome for such a brilliant little film.

Sheridan made an interesting point of the precursors of human sensitivity and, although this appears to have been an underlying theme of the screenplay, it doesn't -- in this writer's opinion -- quite seem to fit the purpose of the film. It seemed to be Siegel's intention to relate the development of a nightmare -- a quite common form of nightmare in which the person experiences rejection from the people of his everyday existence. As Siegel expertly put McCarthy through his paces in a striped suit of all human feelings, we strongly identify with this fantasy & with the horrors of alienation. I think the audience identification with Bennell's horror reached its peak when he rears back, wide-eyed with fright at the realization that Becky is no longer human (the eerie way his face is lit in this shot seemed reminiscent of the early Lewton films). It is the dreamlike horror of McCarthy's dilemma in a world of intangibility that motivates the film.

Paul Mendell  
New York City

RETURN OF COUNT YORGA has me a little bit confused. Fandom doesn't seem to think very much of it, but the San Francisco Chronicle gave it one of the most ecstatic rave reviews I've ever seen. The critic said it "is its own double feature, a chiller of intense gore whose sarcophagus houses a high comic put-down of just about everything. It keeps one completely off balance, which is directly to the purpose. You literally never know what will happen next."

The article by David Allen was not particularly well written, but it was a subject that deserves discussion. My own two favorite animation films are *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* and *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS*. I don't care much for *KING KONG* and *7th VOYAGE OF SINBAD*. They are technical breakthroughs and, for that reason, I am glad they were made. Also, they're fun to watch, which isn't saying much because all animation films are fun to watch. They are forgotten cinema, however. While I have nothing against adventure, or the fact that the pictures are aimed at children, these facts are no excuse for lack of talent displayed in the acting and screenplays.

Steve Fahn  
Portola Valley, California

The beginning of Bob Sheridan's look at *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* came out with some marvelous observations at the cinema people's awareness of what the public wants & will pay to get. The simple addition of "*INVASION OF...*" to the title of the novel does transform the total effect. Bob's comments on humanity are true, and some of the most beautifully expressed words & ideas I've read. In Ireland [sic] has just returned from doing missionary work in Seifras, Northern Ireland--NY has witnessed a distinct difference of people's reactions to others than what I was used to in America. Here, people still say "hello", "Good Morning", etc. to each other. I don't understand what it is about big cities that rob people of their human qualities.

Dave Allen's look at *KONG* gave a lot of dramatic insight on the film. The magic of *KONG*, and a great amount of the appeal, is the character which was captured in that almost-human ape. The fact that the original *KONG* had a personal and distinct character, makes it seem almost impossible that a successful or entertaining remake can be made. The entire article had an important air about it, and was far superior to the technical articles which have appeared in other magazines.

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Las Vegas, Nevada

## NOW PLAYING

(continued from page 9)

ist, Narciso Ibanez Serrador, was recently picked up by American International which gave it a limited, improper advertising campaign and released it under the more commercialized title, *THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED*. It's a shame that the release hasn't been afforded better treatment here, however, because it is an unusual, subdued work which utilizes soft visual images and a deliberate, sombre mood to accomplish a fine effect of mounting suspense which climaxes with one of the most unnerving sequences that has succeeded in raising our hackles in quite some time.

The setting is a late 19th century French boarding school, peopled by many young girls who are there out of the fact that they are in need of "correction." The naturally Lilli Palmer presides dictatorially over the establishment, all the while fanatically forbidding her submissive son, John Moulder Brown, from visiting any of the maidens under the pretext that none of them are good enough for him. As a normal young man, though, he cannot always comply with her stringent demands.

Some of the girls are missing under mysterious circumstances. It soon becomes obvious to the viewer that they have been slain by some unseen, demented assailant. Three of the killings are detailed, all with a tasteful lack of hysterics and spurring blood. Serrador was apparently interested in cause, not effect, in this capacity. Here, it works.

The film is well-constructed, but it does at times tend to lapse into a degree of lethargy when it dwells upon the group of girls in their quest for few-and-far-between sexual trysts with some sojourning repairman, sado-masochistic activities, and hints of lesbianism among the students. There is no nudity, per se, which proves, moreover, the foreknowledge that sex need not be gratuitous for erotica to be prevalent. Still, the overall mood is one of atmospheric quality, with primarily autumnal colors and dimly muted lighting capturing a definite feeling of gloom--unusual for a color film--throughout.

The final scenes, which take place in an almost incredibly weird, darkened attic wherein we finally learn the gruesome secret of the boarding school, are handled with such suspense skill that the effect Serrador achieves there might not inappropriately be compared to the flair of Hitchcock, the master of the grim surprise-shock. The last fifteen minutes, or so, produced a foreboding tenseness unfit for this reviewer while watching a film of this sort for years--and there is a shock! In fact, had the production's entire 104 minutes matched the frenetic tautness of its conclusion, we would assuredly have had another *PSYCHO* to laud.

*THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED* is a sleeper, and even somewhat of a panacea in these days when we have little choice between guessing what happened to Count Dracula and watching occult sex rituals, and terror for art's sake is very nearly a mournful relic of times that are no more.

--Larry Richardson

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